

The Seniors – Chapter 20

“Huh?”

“An importer, down in Florida I think, had a bunch for sale years back and I had some money and bought a dozen. Put ‘em up; sort of figured they’d come in handy someday.”

“I thought that if you got close enough to use a knife, you were too damned close.”

“That’s good in principle, especially since we’re snipers. Thing is, you don’t always have a choice. Military rifles have bayonets; how many times when you were in the Army did you fix a bayonet that wasn’t in training?”

“Never.”

“Right. And you had the M14 rifle, right?”

“Sure did. It didn’t make any sense; the bayonet only had a 6⁵/₈” or 6³/₄” blade.”

“I’m not sure why they did that; I suppose just to put a sharp point on the rifle, not for actual combat. That bayonet they had for the ‘03 Springfield was a real knife. I think they started using them on the Garand at the beginning of WW II and then switched to a 10” blade and recalled the longer ones back to cut them down. Ten inches was still enough, barely. The bayonet for the M16 was nearly identical to the M6.”

“Few of my rifles have bayonet lugs.”

“Your Mossberg’s do and they use the M7 & M9 bayonets. If was me, I’d get one of the new OKC-3S knives the Corps is using as a replacement for the M9. It’s kind of a cross between a bayonet and a bowie knife or the old Corps fighting knife.”

“Expensive?”

“What isn’t these days? About \$160.”

“Each?”

“Yep.”

I looked at the checkbook and called a knife dealer I knew in Springfield, explaining what I wanted and what I wanted it for.”

“A Mossberg 590A1?”

“That’s what I said.”

“You’re one of those patriots, aren’t you?”

“And if I am?”

“Patriots get them for cost. How many shotguns do you have?”

“I have 7 counting my son, his wife and three kids. I was only planning on buying two.”

“Are all seven 590A1s?”

“Yes, they have the ghost ring sight and an 8 round magazine.”

“I know, I have two. Seven at \$90 each is \$630. I can carry you for a while if you’re short.”

“No, we have the money; it’ll have to come out of our hold back money. You know that little extra you keep in the account for a rainy day.”

“You can send me a check or write a check and I can hold it.”

“Thank you, but it’s really not necessary. Beth and I will be up this weekend.”

“I’m closed weekends. My number is 417-555-1324. Call me when you get to Springfield and we’ll have coffee.”

“I hope you weren’t thinking Starbuck’s.”

“That swill? Hardly.”

I knew that Springfield had over a dozen Starbuck’s locations. Maybe some people like the stuff, I didn’t; we either drank Folgers or hot chocolate. Hot chocolate was a late evening drink and we sometimes made buttered toast and dipped it in the cocoa. We needed some of those fill in groceries too. So, after coffee and buying the knives, we’d do our grocery shopping and head home. We were both carrying; I had my Kimber in my middle of the back IWB holster and Beth had her Galco purse with a Hi-Power.

“Joe, Dave. Beth and I are in Springfield.”

“Where are you?”

“Perkins on west Sunshine.”

“See you in twenty.”

In case you don’t already know, a good share of the crowd our age seems to prefer Perkins. A few years back, we were In Phoenix (AZ) and stopped in a Perkins. The res-

restaurant was nearly full, of grey haired people. It was during the winter when the snowbirds fly to Phoenix so I suppose they were mostly retired people from the northern Midwest.

I recognized Joe when they came in and he introduced his wife, Mary. I introduced Beth and we all placed orders. While we waited, I handed him an envelope containing the cash and he handed me a plastic bag containing a shoebox. I took a peek and they were what I'd seen on the Ontario Knife website. It was mostly small talk about how good/bad his business had been before 2008. He cut loose all of his employees and Mary did the books. He was only open from 10am to 5pm Monday through Friday and made as much sharpening knives as he did selling knives. He said that if he didn't have his store paid for, he'd have had to close up.

I ventured a guess and asked about the Russian ballistic knives. He pursed his lips and shook his hand indicating they were too hot to handle. I dropped it and he asked, "How many?"

"You can get them?"

"Can't now, but I bought some and the law got changed so I was stuck with them."

"How much?"

"Well, I paid around \$80 apiece for them, so I have almost \$500 tied up in knives I can't sell. You could have them for \$250 total, but you didn't get them from me. You can't even mail them, it is cash and carry only."

"I'd be willing to pay that much, but we'd have to come back up after the 4th Wednesday when our Social Security checks come in."

"I'll hold them. Call me before you come and I'll bring them to the store. At the present, they're tucked away in a shoe box in my basement."

"Do you have a thing for shoe boxes?"

"They're handy for storage; most people assume they contain old shoes."

"I'll call first; same phone number or not?"

"Not, let me give you my card and you can call the shop after 10 or my home before 9:30. These days, it doesn't take long to open up the store."

After we headed to the store, Beth asked, "What is a ballistic knife?"

"They were made by the Russians in the '80s. It basically looks like a double edged fighting knife, but the blade is spring loaded. Some have a lever and some a button."

They also have a safety pin. In combat, you carry it without the pin and you can push the button to release the blade. It will go about 12' and wound, if not kill, your opponent."

"And naturally, they're illegal."

"Naturally."

"One of these days, you're going to slip up and ATF will be pounding on the door with a search warrant and there will be something you forgot to hide."

"I already have one. John gave it to me."

"That proves it. The only difference between men and boys is the price of their toys."

"It took you how long to figure that out?"

"About two weeks, but I couldn't prove it until now."

"Let's get what groceries we can and pick up anything we miss when we come back in two weeks."

"There's nothing we can't live without. Let's just go home."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, something else might come up that we'll need the money for. I don't mind your gun collection, but it has become an expensive hobby."

"These days, it's far more than a hobby. John and I dropped out of the Ghost Riders and are running our own little operation. You know, you rode to St. Louis with us."

"That wasn't a shopping trip?"

"It was, but that was a cover for what we were really there for."

"You could have told me."

"Did you enjoy shopping?"

"Yes."

"No harm, no foul."

"Don't ask again unless you are willing to let me know what I'm getting into."

"Fair enough, sorry."

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We didn't find a suitable target and our next trip was back to Springfield and we went to the store. I handed him 5 fifties and he handed me a shoe box in a plastic bag. I checked and it contained what he said it did. We looked at some of his other knives and a Randall caught my eye. It was a model 2 Fighting Stiletto with an 8" blade for \$350.

"Go ahead; we'll call it an early Christmas present."

"I've always wanted one but I've never bought one because of the price. Early Christmas present, huh? Ok, that works for me."

We did all of our grocery shopping in a single stop, pretty well filling the camper topped pickup. We stopped for lunch at Perkins and headed home. We managed to unload the pickup and restock the shelves with what we'd purchased. I sat down the next afternoon and wrote checks to pay the bills, finding we still over half of what we'd received. There was a note saying UPS had attempted to make a delivery and would try again tomorrow. That had to be our order from Walton.

Now, rather than being gun poor, we were knife poor. We would give everyone an OKC-3S plus a Russian ballistic knife. The next time Dave and family came up to visit I gave him the knives with explanations.

"What do you do after you've fired the blade and can't recover it, dad. The knife is useless after that."

"Throw it away?"

"I'll make two replacement blades for every knife the next time we come up. I can get the proper high carbon steel in Little Rock."

"Is there any way you could modify the muzzle brake adapter for the rifle suppressor to include a bayonet lug? We could get double duty if we could use the OKC-3S on our M1As."

"I'll look into it. A rifle bayonet on a sniper's rifle? Who ever heard of such a thing?"

"John and I dropped out of the Ghost Riders and have been going it on our own. You should have noticed that I only gave you 5 of those Russian knives. The guy I got them from only had six."

"We won't need anymore."

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“Why not?”

“Geena had her tubes tied; her idea, not mine. She said she didn’t want to bring any more children into a world like this.”

“No more babies? I bought firearms assuming you would have four children. “Your mother and I talked and that suggestion I made about moving your good furniture down to the rental trailer was a bad idea.”

“I’ll bet it was mom; Geena said the same thing.”

“As a matter of fact, it was. But you will look into the bayonet lugs?”

“Sure I have the bayonet and the adapter, it shouldn’t be that hard. I may be able to come up with a lug we can weld onto the existing adapters.”

“Make a couple of spares while you’re at it, I’m sure we’ll find a use for them.”

The following week, I called Joe and asked if he minded my driving up to visit him in his shop. He said he’d be glad to see me and asked if I knew anyone with military caliber pistol ammo. I told him I might and asked what he wanted. He said two sizes, the size the military used both before and after 1990. Hmm, .45ACP and 9mm, this I could do. I set aside 1,000 rounds of Lawman and Gold Dot in each caliber to take with me.

“Hi Joe.”

“Dave. What did you want to talk about?”

“Before we get into that, I brought you 1,000 rounds each of Lawman and Gold Dot for 9mm and .45ACP. The ammo belongs to my son so I’m afraid I can’t just give it to you.”

“No problem, I’d be more than happy to pay the going rate. How much do I owe you?”

“I can round it off; \$2,000.”

“Ouch.”

“I can hold your check.”

“Will you settle for four ounces of gold in one-tenth ounce American Eagles?”

“Aren’t you overpaying? Of course, I’ll take the gold, but gold is almost \$1,200 an ounce.”

“I paid \$50 per coin and those 40 coins cost me \$2,000. I’d be happy if you would.”

“Done. Help me haul it in.”

“We’ll move it from your pickup to the trunk of my car, pull your pickup around back and park next to the SUV.”

“Thank you.”

“How did you end up with so much ammo?”

“That’s a long story, but my son worked for a guy who paid for overtime in ammo or cash.”

“Doing what?”

“My son is a machinist.”

“I don’t need to know any more than that; loose lips and all that crap. Now, what did you want to talk about?”

“I’d like to ask a couple of questions and you’re free to answer or not, your choice. I have an extensive collection of Springfield Armory M1A rifles, do you have one?”

“No. But, I do have 2 HK 91s with extra magazines, but very little extra ammo. I also have two HK 93s, same story. Why?”

“You know I’m one of the patriots, right?”

“That 590A1 was a dead giveaway, they’re illegal.”

“Would you be interested in joining a group?”

“I already belong to a group; do the names Chuck and Rob mean anything to you?”

“As a matter of fact, I do know two people by that name in this area.”

“They’re out of the picture, they got caught. They’re locked up in one of those FEMA Gulags pending trial. Well, it’s actually the military base’s detention facility.”

“I didn’t know that, they seemed like nice guys.”

“They are; Chuck is my son.”

“The group I belong to is small, just the two of us. We previously belonged to the Ghost Riders.”

“Now, I’ve heard of them, or maybe of their exploits. The interesting part I heard was that the leader, some guy they called Sarge, didn’t actually desert the Arkansas National Guard. He really did believe in his oath and was pulling Guard duty the same as always and doing his thing on his off time. The reason he dropped out of your group was that he got activated.”

“He had a Tac-50.”

“Do you know the story about that rifle?”

“Only what he told me.”

“His father wrote patriot fiction and posted most of it on Frugal’s Forums. Now, his father had always wanted certain firearms, but living in California made that all but impossible. The one he wanted the most was a Tac-50 in his later years. Besides the fact that they cost a fortune, they were and are illegal in the People’s Republik. Sarge’s grandfather left his son’s share of his estate in a trust fund that would be divided three ways when the son died. Sarge and his brother each got a third and the son’s wife the other third. When he died, Sarge got the money and bought the rifle. He also inherited all of his father’s firearms.”

“He told me some of the things he had.”

“The German .32 was rare and worth a lot. His father’s M1A turned out to be especially accurate and Sarge arranged for his father to have that Taurus PT1911, which, like the Barrett wasn’t Kalifornia approved. His father also had an OKC-3S for his Mossberg. There’s more to the story, but you get the idea.”

“A friend, John, and I have been going it alone. I got a wild hair and decided to talk to you since you’re obviously a patriot too.”

“And do what?”

“Where is Chuck locked up?”

“Fort Chaffee. The feds shut down the base back in ’97 and turned all but 6,000 acres over to the Arkansas National Guard. Under that National Emergency Centers Establishment Act, they built a camp at Fort Chaffee. Rob and Chuck are locked up in their detention facility.”

“And, when you think about it, we have an insider there, Sarge.”

“But you don’t know his name, if what you told me was correct; you used handles because of OpSec.”

“Do you know his father’s real name?”

“I sure do.”

“And, do you know where the son lived?”

“I do because his father wrote about it in his stories. I don’t know if he still lives there, but he lived in Flippin and went to college in Mountain Home. If they moved, it was probably to Jonesboro. He attended Arkansas State University, the only College in Mountain Home.”

“Do you know Sarge’s actual name?”

“Derek and that son who lives in Bolivar is Derek Jr.”

“We could consider a mission to Fort Chaffee to secure the release of Rob and Chuck.”

“Count me in.”

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It took weeks of planning and a trip or two to Arkansas. We located Sarge’s wife and she put us in touch with him. She said our bona fides would be to ask him his favorite version of the song (Ghost) Riders in the Sky. If he answered Vaughn Monroe, it was cool and Johnny Cash meant it wasn’t. She gave us his cell phone number and we headed over towards Ft. Smith. Fort Chaffee is a little Southeast of Ft. Smith. We spent a day or so scouting the area before calling Sarge.

“Hello?”

“What’s your favorite version of Ghost Riders in the Sky?”

“Vaughn Monroe.”

“This is Bookman.”

“Where are you?”

“Outside Fort Chafee checking the place out.”

“What for?”

“I have a friend whose son is locked up in that detention facility you have.”

“Where can I meet you later in the day?”

“Pick a place and we’ll be there.”

“Who is with you?”

“Farmer.”

“Ok, George’s Restaurant in Ft. Smith. Make it around 6:30 pm.”

“George’s; got it.”

The restaurant was located right in downtown Ft. Smith. We went early and were seated. To hold our table, we ordered appetizers and something to drink. When Sarge showed up, he joined us.

“I have to tell you, I know who you are now because of my friend in Springfield who is Chuck’s father. I won’t mention any names, of course, Sarge. Is there anything you can do to help us spring those two guys?”

“Let’s order, they close at 8:30.”

Sarge seemed to be lost in thought. Either he couldn’t make up his mind over what he wanted to eat or he was thinking about the question I raised. After we ordered, he said, “Very little, but I’m willing to do what I can.”

“What can you do?”

“Not everyone who is a patriot deserted the Guard. I didn’t but told you I did so you wouldn’t be afraid of me. It will take me a week to talk to some of the others I know to determine what I can actually do.”

“Fair enough, by the way, dinner is on us.”

“How is Mechanic?”

“Got his job in Little Rock back and went back home.”

“If we needed help on the outside, how big of a force could you muster?”

“Four for sure; maybe more. I don’t know how big the Springfield group is or if they’d be willing to participate. You can count on the two of us, Chuck’s father and my son. I’ll know next time I see you.”

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“You have my cell phone number, call and say how many Ghost Riders were herding the cattle.”

“Good idea.”

We finished our dinner and Sarge took off. John and I had more coffee before we left and then returned home, arriving late.

“You were gone longer than I expected.”

“We ended up going to Jonesboro and from there to Fort Chaffee and finally ate dinner tonight in Fort Smith. Now we have to wait a week to see what Sarge can work out. Meanwhile, I have to contact Joe and see how much help that group in Springfield can offer.”

“You actually plan on taking on the entire Arkansas National Guard?”

“Not really, I’d be willing to guess that the Governor has most them spread out around the state, especially in areas with large populations of federal employees like Little Rock, Fayetteville and Pine Bluff Arsenal.”

“Are we going to Springfield tomorrow? I’d like to do a little shopping and can drop you off at the knife shop to work on some of the details with Joe.”

“Good idea; why don’t you call Mary and see if she’d like to go along. When Joe paid me for the ammo, he paid using tenth ounce Gold Eagles based on his cost and not the market value. I’m going to take him 2 cases of the Federal Match in .308 and 5.56.”

“Two of each or one of each?”

“Oh, two cases total. I’ll still come out ahead and I’ve got to either get the gold coins to David or hang onto them until when they come back up.”

“Hello?”

“Mary, this is Beth Morgan from Branson. I’m sorry I’m calling late.”

No problem, we were watching a DVD.”

“Dave and I would like to come up tomorrow. I want to do some shopping and Dave wants to talk to Joe.”

“What time?”

“Around 10am.”

“That should work; I’ll get cleaned up and meet you at Perkins at 10. If you’re hungry, go ahead and eat, don’t wait on me.”

“Thanks Mary, we’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Hi Joe.”

“Hey Dave, Mary told me you’d be in today.”

“I parked my pickup in back, I brought you something.”

“Ammo?”

“Yes.”

“Let’s get it into my car.”

“Wow match grade no less. How much?”

“1,000 rounds of each.”

“No, how much for the ammo?”

“Nothing. You way overpaid me for the pistol ammo, this is on the house.”

“Ok, thank you. Is that what you wanted to see me about?”

“We tracked down Sarge at Fort Chaffee. They moved to Jonesboro so he could finish his undergraduate program. By the way, does your group have a name?”

“We call ourselves the Springfield Hornets after one of the local High School teams.”

“How many can you get to help if we try to spring Chuck and Rob?”

“Counting me? Only six for sure. Some of the others dropped out after Chuck and Rob were captured.”

“I can guarantee 4 and 2 more if we get our wives to go with us. My grandsons aren’t quite ready for the big leagues.”

“Make that 7, if Beth goes Mary would kill me if I didn’t let her go too.”

“No disrespect, is she capable?”

“Is she ever; wait, you’ll see.”

“Ok then, I’ll tell Sarge we can supply a total of 13. Now, sell me something so I have an excuse to be in here.”

“Here’s a nice one, the Buck Colleague. It’s \$7 more if you get one with NRA logo.”

“Any sharper?”

“Nope, both are made in China.”

“How much?”

“No charge, thanks again for the ammo.”

“I’ll call when I have more details. Now, we’re supposed to meet the wives at Perkins at 1pm for lunch.”

“If you don’t mind me asking, exactly what do you have to fight with?”

“Several M1As, mostly loaded models and a Super Match; A PTR 91; a Barrett light fifty and a model 95; a bunch of 12 gauge shotguns; my Kimber Tactical II; a few Hi-Powers; two 5.56 carbines, an 870 with a hunting barrel, and all kinds of single action revolvers, 4 Winchester lever actions with single action revolvers in the same calibers; a pile of Marlin 1895 Cowboys; and, miscellaneous .22 rifles and hand guns. We also have some ordnance, LAW rockets, M61 hand grenades, M183 demolition kits a M203 and some 40mm grenades. Our ammo assortment runs from surplus to Black Hills match. Between my friend John and me, we have about every standard cartridge available for the .50 caliber rifles, including MK211.”

“What did you do, rob the NRA Armory?”

“I mostly bought them one at a time over a period of years. Say, do you need silencers?”

“I have one for each of our battle rifles.”

“The ones that Chuck got?”

“How did you know?”

“My son David made them.”

“He does good work. Wouldn’t mind having those fast attach adapters.”

“He can make them but he needs the rifle to fit them.”

“Expensive?”

“Cheaper than Surefire but he uses their design. No doubt he’s infringing their patent but that’s tough shit. I have him working on an attachment for the muzzle brake adapters, a weld on bayonet lug so we can use the OKC-3S bayonet/fighting knife on our M1As.”

“I thought it was the M9.”

“It was but the new one replaces the M9 because their blades tended to break.”

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I called Sarge and told him there were 13 Ghost Riders. He asked how many were 60 or older. I had to tell him only 5 for sure possibly more. He said he was trying to arrange a veteran’s tour of Fort Chaffee that he would conduct himself as a recon. Some places would be off limits even then, including the ammo bunkers and detention facility. We could, however, get a feel of the place and develop our own plan for his approval and/or assistance.

“Joe, Dave. I didn’t think to ask, how many of the people you can put together for this op that are over sixty?”

“Including the women? Six, but there are a couple of guys with grey hair that look older than their actual age, so make it eight. Why do you need to know that?”

“Sarge is arranging a veteran’s tour of Fort Chaffee.”

“It will include the veteran’s wives?”

“I didn’t ask; let us assume so for the moment. I’ll get back to you.”

“Sarge, does that include the veterans’ wives?”

“It could.”

“Ok, there will be eleven.”

“It’s set up for the Saturday after next, 09:00 at the front gate. Leave the hardware home, you may be searched.”

When you’re waiting for something to happen, the clock always seems to slow down. That doesn’t seem to change much as you age. It’s almost as if you are trying to synchronize yourself with that slowing clock because you generally slow down too. A couple of follow up calls from Sarge apparently using the number he got for my phone from

his caller ID and the visit was set. He suggested that we consider a strike early on a Sunday morning, the one time the detention facility had a minimal staff. These soldiers were God fearing, church going Christians. He'd do his best to get a fellow patriot who was an MP to volunteer to pull duty at the facility whenever we planned to strike.

Frankly, the tour was boring, if you've seen one military base, you've seen most of them. Our group of 13 had increased to 15 because 2 of the wives who accompanied their husbands on the tour volunteered for the mission. We agreed to do it the following Sunday and I called Dave and filled him in. He said they would be up Friday night after work and not to wait dinner. Joe and I agreed that everyone would assemble at our place late Saturday night and we'd leave for Fort Chaffee around oh-two-hundred.

It was about 165 miles, but we allowed 4 hours, rather than 3, just in case. We were armed with shotguns and pistols. The shotguns were loaded with non-lethal shells and the pistols with FMJ rounds. We agreed that, were we forced to shoot, we'd start with the shotguns and only use the pistols as a last ditch defense. It's easy to say shoot to wound, but it's harder to do especially in low light conditions. We discussed it openly and left it up to each individual to make his/her own decision at the time.

We gained access just where we were told to go and moved silently to the detention facility. A guard was just leaving and another guard came out to take a smoke break. He fit the description of the patriot Sarge had identified to us. John and I moved up and asked, "How's it going soldier?"

"You damned neared scared the life out of me. Ok, here's how it's going to go down. There's a roll of duct tape and you tape me to a chair. Your friends are in cells 4 and 6. Let them out and take off. I'll be relieved in 30 minutes, so your time is limited."

You can probably imagine the expressions on Chuck and Rob's faces when they saw me. They were even more excited outside when they saw their parents. We left the way we came and were moving towards home when the breakout siren sounded. Our trip home was much faster than our trip down. It was decided to put Chuck and Rob up in Dave and Geena's trailer for the moment because the first place the authorities would look would be in Springfield.

"Now I know how those detainees down in Guantanamo felt. Being locked in a cage is no fun at all. Don't let anyone kid you; they're still using waterboarding on some of the prisoners."

"Did they use it on you two?"

"They didn't actually catch us in the act, so they were speculating at best. We hadn't even gotten completely set up. They got our rifles, too. We're going to have to replace those."

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“I have a pre-64 Winchester model 70 in .308 with a good scope, will that do?”

“Sure will, thank you.”

“I’ll donate a HK91 to the cause to replace the PTR91K,” John said.

“Man, a real H&K, thank you.”

“You’ll be able to spend some time on our range but it’s only around 1,000’ deep.”

“There’s just one thing I need to warn you about. It’s possible that the ATF might turn up at any time. They’ve thoroughly searched the place and before that, it was a US Marshal. They think that they’re Arnold Schwarzenegger. You should have a little warning and will need to head for the hills.”

“What are they looking for, the silencers?”

“No. They’re looking for my firearms and refuse to believe my claim that I sold them because times got hard.”

“Can they find them?”

“If they knew where to look, yes. I took a hint from a patriot fiction story I read where the gun room was behind a bar. ‘For a minute or two, Clarence was at a loss; he then noticed two identical statuettes, one on either side of the back bar. He tugged on one and it slid toward the center of the back bar about 3”. He tugged on the other and it, too slid toward the center of the back bar about 3”. He stepped back and pulled on the back bar. It slowly came forward on the tracks. He pulled it as far as he could then stepped around behind the back bar and pushed it up to the front bar. Taking a flashlight, he looked in the 8’ deep by 16’ wide room. He sucked in his breath.’ I sort of did something like that but not as elaborate.”

“A hidden gun room?”

“You could find it with ground penetrating radar. When the ATF was here, I challenged them to bring their radar and look. It was pure bluff, but they haven’t tried.”

“I notice that your soil is very moist, is all of the soil like that?”

“Mostly, why?”

“Well, moist soil prevents the radar from penetrating deeply, sometimes only a few centimeters.”

I told you earlier that I later learned about the radar; this was that occasion.

The more I considered our current circumstances, e.g., a few of tons of illegal ammo, enough illegal rifles to arm, after a fashion, a platoon of infantry and all of those things that went Kaboom in the night, the more I realized we needed to reevaluate everything and make changes as needed. A successful 'run for the hills' seemed unlikely. It wasn't a lack of hills; we had more than we need in this part of Missouri. The problem would be time; the ATF had managed to interrupt our Independence Day picnic and we had virtually no warning.

Most assuredly, if the ATF found everything the list of charges would look like a telephone book running hundreds of pages. When I voiced my concerns out loud, Rob and Chuck began to ask questions looking for a solution. Their first proposal was to move the armory to a different location. Since we had an ammo bunker, why not excavate a large space underneath, form walls with concrete block and pour a concrete floor?

"And get to the weapons and ammo how?"

"We're working on that, it can't be hard for the people who live here, but it has to be nearly impossible for outsiders."

"Tell me something I don't already know."

"How big is your stash?"

"Come down to the shelter and I'll show you."

"We entered the shelter and I showed the mechanics behind locking and unlocking the bookcase covering the armory."

"Do you actually have any idea how much stuff you have here?"

"Guns, yes, ammo no. Some of the other things we only have small quantities of, like anything explosive."

"And from what we can see, it's not buried any lower than the floor of the shelter, right?"

"That's about the size of it. You have that pondering look of some who has his gears grinding."

"Here's what I think, but it's only a thought. Let's assume for a moment that the ATF knows about the bookcase."

"You don't have to assume that, they do. They couldn't figure out the combination it takes to open it."

“So, if they came back, they might try harder to gain entrance?”

“Like what?”

“Explosives. Can you imagine what would have happened if they chose that option?”

“A lot of dead ATF agents.”

“How about they blow it and find nothing?”

“How do you propose doing that?”

“Temporarily empty the armory and dig down from the top like you must have done. Except, we dig deep enough so we’re under the floor level of the shelter. We can construct a larger bunker and store everything there. Then, we build a thinner floor for the present armory so when they look inside all they will find is whatever you decide to store there. That could be your communications equipment and your radiological equipment or maybe your spare legal firearms. It could even be a combination of all three.”

“Clarence is never around when you need him.”

“Who’s Clarence?”

“Clarence is a character out of a patriot fiction story who found a man’s gun collection hidden behind the back bar of his family room or whatever.”

“Do you have a back bar we could do something like that with?”

“I don’t even have a bar, let alone a back bar.”

“What do you think of the idea?”

“It might work, or might not, who is to say? I will say that simple is good and simpler better. From what I see, the only thing it will accomplish is making the guns harder to get at when we need them.”

“I see your side of it; we’ll keep working on it.”

“Thanks fellas.”

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The bottom line was that 2 weeks later, they hadn’t come up with a better idea. They had abandoned both the subterranean chamber under the ammo bunker and building a new armory under the shelter floor. It left us just where we had been; no better or worse off. Their wives and children came down and met them in Branson unsure whether or

not they were under surveillance. The wives checked into a motel in adjoining rooms and Chuck and Rob came in through the back windows. Murdering a federal employee is a capital crime. *With Six You Get Egghroll* (movie title). If that was indeed the case, most of us were entitled to a 7 course Chinese meal. And, we weren't the worst of the patriots or the most prolific.

Since there was no way to directly connect us to the Fort Chaffee breakout, we went about our normal business. That included farrowing more sows, calling the vet when a mare foaled and gardening. To date, we hadn't had the type of national emergency that affected the country widely. I know, I know, the plague and 6 nukes. We didn't get sick and they didn't set off a nuke in Missouri. Rob even took a turn breaking a 3 year old filly. They aren't mares until they're 4 years old. While the vet said we could breed her, we held off for a year. Our horse herd had started with 4 geldings and we added two mares and a stallion. With the new foals we were up to nine but only had seven we could ride.

John arranged for us to get feed from the guy renting his land. In turn, we gave him a market weight hog and a side of beef. Then we made our usual trip buying extra hams and bacon. This time, Beth added two smoked loins (Canadian bacon). Next, Chuck and Rob helped Beth and I to do a thorough inventory of our food stocks. We were in the best shape we'd ever been in and had another small order from Walton on the way.

The COLA used by Social Security and our pension funds wasn't keeping up with inflation, one more worry. With food prices changing faster than we could keep up, we modified the basic quantities of food we stored. For example, we averaged inventorying 120 cans of Folgers. That was increased to 180. We doubled our supply of bathroom tissue and canned meats like Spam, tuna, etc.

I was the only one who wouldn't eat either the rabbits or Tilapia so we lay in extra bundles of macaroni and cheese. We could have made it from scratch, but I'd been eating the boxed stuff so long I preferred that.

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After weeks of searching in the Springfield area, the feds stopped looking for Chuck and Rob. They didn't forget them, not one bit; however, they were chasing more recent escapees. Once we'd pulled off the prison break at Fort Chaffee, proving it could be done, more and more patriots worked to free their friends. It was turning into a 3 ring circus between them trying to nab the patriots in the first place, keeping them securely confined and looking for them after they'd been sprung.

The economic stimulus package hadn't worked, unless you call creating inflation working. Unemployment fell slightly but more people were living on the dole than any other time in history. These days, everyone had paid into FICA most of their adult lives. The federal government was supposed to hold the funds in trust until you retired, earning money on the trust funds. For many years the feds couldn't access the trust funds;

eventually, they found a way, buying US government bonds or some such. I could look it up, but it isn't that important.

As a result of the 1983 amendments, particularly the tax increases, the Social Security system began to generate a large short-term surplus of funds, intended to cover the added retirement costs of the "baby boomers." Congress invested these surpluses into special series, non-marketable US Treasury Securities held by the Social Security Trust Fund. Under the law, the government bonds held by Social Security are backed by the full faith and credit of the US government. Because the government had adopted the unified budget during the Johnson administration, this surplus offsets the total fiscal debt, making it look much smaller. There has been significant disagreement over whether the Social Security Trust Fund has been saved, or has been used to finance other government programs and other tax cuts.

If it ain't broke, don't fix it! Too late now. Full faith and credit? Get real!

"Sure hate to see you fellas leave."

"Our wives will be happy to have us home. Again, thanks for everything, you were a real lifesaver. We sure would like to pay you for the rifles, especially the HK 91, it is worth a lot."

"Take it with thanks giving. We're not particularly short on firearms. Tell Joe hi for me."

"We will."

With that they were off, driving Joe's car that he'd dropped off for their return trip. Joe had taken Chuck's pickup to use until his car was returned. On another front, each year since the AWB had been passed, a Representative would introduce a bill in the House to repeal it and a colleague in the Senate would do the same. During the first 4 years of the Administration, the bills never got out of Committee. They were simple bills and identical, eliminating the need for a Conference Committee to bring the bills into alignment.

However, after the mid-term elections of 2014, the Republicans had a small majority in both the House and Senate. This time, the bills were tied to a spending package that Obama insisted he must have to 'finish his work'. Is that the same as finishing us off? The spending bill, including that tiny little Amendment, passed both the House and Senate with better than $\frac{2}{3}$ majorities. He had no choice; he had to sign the legislation. And, we got our guns and ammo back!

The Seniors – Chapter 24

I should say most of us did because states like the Peoples Republik of Kalifornia adopted the full text of the repealed AWB. That also applied to Massachusetts, Illinois and couple or three other states. Anyone who previously had some sort of magazine ban now had a full blown AWB. Kalifornia was the worst of the lot, even banning BB guns and air rifles.

Kalifornia wasn't our problem, securing the release of those people who ended up in the FEMA camps was. It was disgraceful the way they kept those camps. You were supposed to have a bed, food, sanitation and medical care. Why were the compounds surrounded by chain link fences topped with razor wire? Why did they have watch towers with the machine guns pointing inward?

The law said:

Purpose of National Emergency Centers- The purpose of a national emergency center shall be to use existing infrastructure-

(1) to provide temporary housing, medical, and humanitarian assistance to individuals and families dislocated due to an emergency or major disaster;

(2) to provide centralized locations for the purposes of training and ensuring the coordination of Federal, State, and local first responders;

(3) to provide centralized locations to improve the coordination of preparedness, response, and recovery efforts of government, private, and not-for-profit entities and faith-based organizations; and

(4) to meet other appropriate needs, as determined by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

It reminds me of the ATF regarding their interpretation of the Firearms Owner's Protection Act. As debate for FOPA was in its final stages, Rep. William J. Hughes (D-NJ) proposed an amendment to ban the civilian ownership or transfer of any fully-automatic weapon which was not registered by May 19, 1986. However, any such weapon manufactured and registered before the May 19 cutoff could still be legally owned and transferred by civilians. There were many people, like John for example, who had automatic/select fire weapons that weren't registered. Plus, there was the issue of Missouri law prohibiting suppressors.

However, the problems weren't over. Obama said we could negotiate with Iran. Do you remember when Vice President Joe Biden warned that the US stands ready to take preemptive action against Iran if it does not abandon nuclear ambitions and its support for terrorism?

But in his first major policy speech as President Barack Obama's No. 2, Biden also declared the US open for talks with Iran and Russia to repair relations. And he reached out to the world with a promise that the Obama administration will work with allies to solve global problems.

The matter at Fort Chaffee was resolved when several hundred men and women carrying state of the art assault weapons showed up, burst through the gates and surrounded the FEMA camp. A single volley of fire into any one of the towers would have taken out the guards. The guards weren't fools, they gave up and left the gates open when they left. The story repeated itself until all of the FEMA camps were empty and faith based organizations took over helping the internees.

Apparently Biden wasn't just talking. The US and Iran did enter into negotiations. And they talked, and they talked... All the while, apparently, Iran was building additional missiles and nuclear weapons. Pakistan let A.Q. Khan out of prison and he disappeared shortly thereafter. It was finally determined that he'd flown out of Karachi using a Saudi Passport. After Saudi Arabia, he'd simply disappeared. Some claimed to have seen him in Iraq and others claimed to have seen him crossing the border into Iran.

Whatever the case, he'd had almost five years to do what he did best. In the very early spring of 2015, North Korea, who wouldn't give up its nuclear weapons, China, who had built many more nuclear weapons and Iran, who we weren't sure had nuclear weapons announced a joint action. It's that Axis of Evil again, but with nukes. And only one deadline, Taiwan.

In reverse order, Iran said that if its neighbors didn't help it, it would take on Israel on its own. North Korea said they were transferring their missile forces and nuclear weapons to China. China said Taiwan had seven days to accept reunification or they would attack.

We'd had our attack, 6 nukes set off by terrorists in 6 major cities. The cities were still being cleaned up and rebuilding wouldn't begin until it was deemed safe. The government was operating out of multiple locations around the US, no longer concentrated in a single location. Obama was in Cheyenne Mountain and Biden at Mt. Weather. The Congress had essentially taken over the Greenbrier resort. Basically they used whatever space was available. Unknown to the general public, there were far more bunkers than Offutt, Cheyenne Mountain and Mt. Weather. Everyone knew about the Greenbrier, they gave tours. It didn't take long to reequip the location when Congress wanted it done.

"We got the radiation equipment back, recalibrated."

"I hate spending the money Beth, but it doesn't do us much good if we can't count on it."

"They are our insurance plain and simple. Are you feeling ok? You look peaked."

“A little tired, that’s all. I probably ought to get into see the doctor and have a physical.”

“I’ll call and make both of us appointments, better safe than sorry.”

We drove up to Springfield and had the physicals. The office said they’d call if the lab results showed anything. Four days later, they called back and said they wanted to see me. My lab work was a bit off; my RBC was down. The doctor wanted me to have an endoscopic stomach exam. He scheduled it with an associate for the following week and we returned for the exam.

“Have you been worrying about something?”

“Just the normal stuff, why?”

“You have two bleeding ulcers. I’m going to put you on Nexium and I’d like to see you again in three months. If you have problems, please call.”

“Thanks, I guess.”

“Here’s a two month supply of Nexium to get you started and a prescription for more.”

“How long will I need to take it?”

“Possibly forever, but you can call anytime you want more samples. You should check with your regular doctor and get another blood test in a month to six weeks.”

“Did he say what caused it?”

“I forgot to ask. I’ll tell our regular doc and see what he says.”

Our regular doctor was surprised and put me on clopidogrel (Plavix). The manufacturer of Plavix says don’t take it if you have a bleeding ulcer.

Note: In 2006, generic clopidogrel was briefly marketed by Apotex, a Canadian generic pharmaceutical company before a court order halted further production until resolution of a patent infringement case brought by Bristol-Myers Squibb. The court ruled that Bristol-Myers Squibb's patent was valid and has patent protection until November 2011. In 2007, the production was halted to many retail pharmacies and will be changing back to Plavix.

Neither Beth nor I took many pills. I attributed that to our healthy lifestyle which included plenty of exercise taking care of the livestock and our huge garden. Once we got started planting a very large garden, it was like eating peanuts and we couldn’t stop. Geena would come up and stay during canning season for a share of the food. Another few years and I’d have Sheila on the range, but for the moment it was my two teenaged grandsons.

John called me one day asked me if I was free to stop by. I said sure and was over there in ten minutes.

“Man, you don’t look so good.”

“Well, neither do you.”

“All I have is a pair of bleeding ulcers and I’m on Nexium. What’s wrong with you?”

“Nothing you can cure with a pill, pancreatic cancer. The thing is I don’t have any living relatives. My wife died about ten years back and our only son was shot by some gangster in Kansas City.”

“I’m sorry to hear that John. Hell, I’m sorry to hear about everything. Is there something I can do to help?”

“Not really, I’ll be going into a hospice in Springfield soon. I’ve sold my land off and I want your family to have my gun collection to do with as you see fit.”

“Thank you, but I don’t know if we can accept that.”

“Why not? I assure you there are no living relatives and it’s mine to do with as I see fit. You have 3 grandchildren, keep them in mind. I have, my will provides that any remaining monies be equally divided among them.”

“If you insist, of course, we’ll accept you firearms for the family. When are you going into the hospice?”

“Next Monday.”

“Dave will be up tomorrow, how about we come over on Saturday and haul it over to our place then?”

“You have your pickup, let’s load up the firearms and you can come back for the ammo on Saturday.”

“Ok, thanks.”

“What did John want honey?”

“To tell me he has 4th stage pancreatic cancer and will be going into a hospice in Springfield on Monday.”

“What a shame.”

“It is that. However, he said he had no living relatives with his wife dead several years and their only son being shot in Kansas City some years back. He insisted we take his entire gun collection. I have nearly a pickup load of firearms to get into the shelter and David and I will go on Saturday and pick up the ammo.”

“What does he have?”

“A lot of everything, especially H&K rifles.”

“Do you need help?”

“Oh please.”

“He had more than we had.”

“Did you notice that some of those Colt revolvers were still new in the box? There is a well-used set, but altogether it appears he had about 4 complete sets of SAA .45 Colt in each barrel length, including the ones with the 3½” barrel called the Sheriff’s model.”

“What would you suppose that gun collection is worth?”

“Considering the AW50, the scope, the H&Ks, thirty grand easy; and, that not counting the ammo.”

“My Lord.”

“Our collection is worth nearly as much as his, but he has us edged out a little.”

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One thing I haven’t mentioned is the cigarettes. Between the feds adding 61¢ a pack and Missouri adding another 39¢ a pack, the price of a carton of smokes went up a buck a pack. I wouldn’t have minded the new Sin Tax, provided it went to treat illnesses attributed to smoking. But no, it went to benefit children who never smoked. The government was trying yet again to legislate morality. One of the company attorneys I knew when I worked in Springfield said that he learned in law school that despite government attempts, legislating morality always failed and gave Prohibition as an example. So, I rolled my own.

I had never smoked in the house, Beth forbade it. Nonetheless, she would buy my cigarettes if I asked, which I never did. We rarely drank and it wasn’t as if we were supporting several bad habits. You may recall we tried to make beer, but only once. Unless collecting guns and ammo was a bad habit; we had way more than two guns apiece and I’ve never found a way to shoot more than two at a time. Looking back, I thank God that we’d never overspent when it came to ammo. We may have been able to get a higher return for the suppressors, but chose not to.

The Seniors – Chapter 25

If you've been following the timeline, China did not attack Taiwan. They did, however, impose a naval blockade. I had stopped watching the news for a few days over my stomach problems. I then learned that John had 4th stage pancreatic cancer. He asked that I drive him up to Springfield to the hospice when we went over to pick up the ammo. I told him that Beth and I would both go, if that was ok with him.

A hospice is a nursing home for the dying and rather a gruesome place. Before we got out of the truck, he gave me something I hadn't expected, an H&K USP Tactical with a Knight's Armament suppressor. I don't know why I was surprised, it was one of his favorites, or so he claimed. I would have thought he'd favor the Kimber. We checked him in and stayed to visit for a while but a nurse gave him a pain shot and he soon drifted off.

Except for what happened next, we would have continued to visit him. He'd mentioned on the drive up that everything was prepaid and not forget the small inheritance he was leaving for our grandchildren. I guess I hadn't realized how close we had become because both Beth and I got all choked up with emotion. But, John was a God fearing man and shouldn't have much trouble getting into the great beyond. That is unless God didn't much care for snipers.

It took several days to sort through the ammunition and firearms. It was necessary to remove all of the ammo from the small armory just to hold the firearms; which got me to thinking that we'd never actually built a hidden ammo bunker. There was nothing wrong with the one I'd built and I transferred all of the ammo into it since it was large enough to use both as an ammo bunker and cold cellar. The only change I made was to the locking system. Where I'd had a single 4 roller combination lock with standard hasp and ring, I replaced it with two case hardened hasps and rings and a pair of Master Lock Pro Security Iron Shrouded keyed locks with the same keys. They ran \$42 each for the pair and were nearly indestructible. I figured if they were good enough for the government, they'd work for me.

Dave was back up the following weekend and the first words out of his mouth were, "Have you been following the news?"

"Not really. We took John to Springfield on Monday. Then I spent Tuesday sorting through the ammo and Thursday and Friday moving it into the ammo bunker. Here's a key, the locks both use the same key and they came with two per lock. I also gave one to your mother and another to Geena. So, what did I miss?"

"I'm not sure where to start."

"You might try the beginning."

“Ok, China imposed a naval blockade on Taiwan and gave them 7 days to accept reunification.”

“I heard that and the blockade came instead of the attack they threatened.”

“Did you know that North Korea transferred its missile and nuclear weapons to China?”

“I heard that too.”

“How about Iran saying that if its neighbors didn’t help them, they’d take on Israel on their own?”

“I heard that too. However I haven’t heard anything since I heard those three things.”

“The US sortied the George Washington from Yokosuka and the Reagan from San Diego to be joined by the Stennis and Lincoln from Washington.”

“That’s most of our Pacific carriers!”

“They moved the Nimitz to Pearl.”

“That’s all of our west coast carriers, damn.”

“I spoke to our supplier at Pine Bluff and he told me the military was at DEFCON 3/THREATCON BRAVO. The Navy is sailing at Condition III, Material Condition ALPHA. I asked if there was anything available at the moment and he said, ‘Nada’.”

“Come out and check out the bunker, I doubt we need any more now that we have John’s complete gun collection and ammo. Now, don’t repeat what I’m about to tell you to anyone besides Geena. John had no family and his will provides that your children will inherit any remaining estate. He didn’t say what they were to use it for, but I would assume college.”

“How is he doing?”

“Not good. I’d give him 3 months, tops. Want a Kimber Custom Tactical II or a USP Tactical to replace your 1911A1?”

“I’m good for now. I don’t really have the time to spend on getting used to a different pistol.”

“Back to the Navy; did they say anything about where they’d join up the Task Force(s)?”

“I sort of doubt it will be in the South China Sea.”

“Anything about the submarines?”

“Same source said the west coast boomers are all deployed and most of the Los Angeles I class boats are sailing to support the Carriers. The Seawolf class boats are based in the Puget Sound. The Virginia class boats are all east coast based.”

“What about the SSGNs?”

“All on the east coast but I suppose they could move some of the east coast vessels to the Pacific.”

“Provided they have time.”

“Dad, I think they may have been begun moving them the moment China issued that 7 day warning. For all we could know, they may be half way to Hawaii.”

“I don’t like it. Thanks for filling me in. I do have another concern though.”

“The ATF?”

“No, the food police, aka FEMA. Are you aware that there are a series of Executive Orders giving the president or his appointees nearly unlimited powers in case of a National Emergency? I sometimes read Dan Quayle’s website and he has a link to Stan Deyo’s website.”

“That’s Steve Quayle, not Dan Quayle; Dan Quayle is the former Vice President under Bush Senior who can’t spell potato.”

“Anyway, he has a list of Executive Orders on his website. I saw a similar list in a patriot fiction story by TOM. One of the EOs allows the government to seize food if you’re hoarding.”

“Do you believe that this will turn into a shooting war?”

“That just might happen. I want you to take a CD V-742, a charger and the CD V-715 survey meter when you go home tomorrow. What’s the condition of your bug out bag?”

“Fully stocked and good for three days.”

“Let’s get one of those 6 gallon food pails and stock it for a thirty day supply of freeze dried food. You be sure to take your rifle, shotgun and pistol. Say, did you ever get the extra blades made for the ballistic knives.”

“Damn, I meant to bring them, they all done.”

“Put them in your pickup so you don’t forget again. John had a dozen and he gave me one. Somewhere in all of his stuff are the other eleven he kept.”

We eventually found them in an ammo can along with the OKC-3S bayonets modified to fit his H&K rifles. That reminded me and I asked Dave about the bayonet lugs. He said they were done and he'd have to bring them up and use a MIG welder to add them to the rifles. He had enough to do both the adapters and the original flashhiders. Then, I remember that Joe had said he wanted a fast attach adapter.

John died a week to the day after he'd been admitted to the hospice. I checked and learned that his instructions were for direct cremation and interment next to his wife. A lawyer called a few days later and asked Beth and I to drive to Springfield for the reading of the will. If the grandchildren and their parents were available we were to bring them too. Dave couldn't get the time off so Beth and I accompanied by Geena and our grandkids made the trip.

The estate, before attorney fees was in the vicinity of \$160,000 to be divided three ways. Cost and fees were estimated to be between 5 and 10 thousand dollars. That surely would give the kids a foot up on paying for a college education in a few years. Once the will was filed and court approval granted, the checks would be forwarded to our address and we could give them to Geena.

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As luck would have it, the kids had their checks in 3 weeks. Canning season was nearing an end and school season was fast approaching. After reaching record highs of over \$1,200 an ounce, gold had fallen to \$650 an ounce and silver proportionally lower, close to the 50:1 ratio. The price seemed to be falling daily as the economy finally began to improve.

After the kids were in bed, we four adults sat down and discussed what to do with the money. One suggestion was high interest saving accounts. Another was to convert it into gold and silver coins. Each had its risks; the bank could go broke but the FDIC would cover losses up to \$100,000 per individual. An investment in precious metals could see their inheritance cut in half or double. The final decision was to do both, put half in a high interest saving account and the other half in gold and silver, minus \$500 that they could spend as they wanted.

All the gold would amount to ~38.5 ounces. All the silver would amount to 1,924 ounces. A 50-50 split would result in 19.25 ounces of gold and 982 ounces of silver apiece with ~\$25,000 in their savings accounts. Since the US mint at West Point was again producing coins, we went with Gold and Silver American Eagles. The remainder purchased a relatively high rate CD. The boys wanted to spend their money on camping equipment and Sheila, now walking and talking, simply didn't understand. Geena held her money in a savings account.

Because the kids rode our horses every chance they got, they typically wore jeans, long sleeve cowboy shirts, cowboy boots, cowboy hats (Resistol 5X Buck Outs). Even Sheila

wore jeans and a shirt but no cowboy boots until her feet were stronger. Geena had helped her pick out a Hill Country. The kids all selected black hats. Beth and I added extras, rifle scabbards, saddlebags, and Lariats. Not knowing what to buy, we selected Classic Ranch Ropes, 7/16" in diameter, 35' long.

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The US Fleet stopped short of Taiwan, around 200 miles east. China began raining missiles on the island. They'd done this before however, not recently. The missiles were relatively short ranged and could only fly from the mainland to the island. The thing about it was, even if we'd have put guided missile destroyers and cruisers in the Taiwan Straits, we could not have intercepted them all. We supplied extra Patriot III missile units, flying them in on C5Bs and C-17s. Around the world, the tension increased and sooner or later the pot was going to boil over. Around 2:00 on a Wednesday, Dave called.

"I just talked to the soldier. The family and I are headed up to you place. We'll be leaving just as soon as we finish putting things into the trailer. If you need anything, this might be a good time to get it." Click, he hung up.

"Who was that honey?"

"David. He said he talked to that soldier and they'll be leaving Little Rock shortly heading here. He also said that if we need anything, we'd better get it. Do we need anything?"

"Nothing comes to mind. What now?"

"I suppose we'd better see to the livestock. Get 'em boarded up and feed laid out for an extended period. Do you suppose that this has something to do with Taiwan?"

"You should know better than I would; has there been anything on the news?"

"It's funny you should ask, there's been a dearth of world news recently and that's most unusual. MSM has been focused inward, digging up every little bit trash they can find and trying to win another Pulitzer Prize."

"Come on, I'll help with the livestock. Do we want to harvest the fish?"

"We probably should, it won't take long to fillet them and get them ready for the freezer. None of the rabbits are big enough to butcher, thank God."

The Seniors – Chapter 26

About 90 minutes later, we had all of the tasks completed and things moved from the house to the shelter, just in case. It was mostly the things in the refrigerator and if we overreacted, they'd be easy to move back. I disconnected the communications gear, except for a single radio, from the antennas and grounded the antennas. I could communicate with Dave with that radio.

"This is Dave on mobile two, can you hear me base?"

"Five by five, where are you?"

"About to cross the state line, we'll be there in 30 minutes or less. Have you moved everything to the backyard?"

"Ten-four."

"Mobile two out."

The only thing in our backyard was our shelter and near that, the ammo bunker. Our just in case thinking had borne fruit; but what kind of fruit, mushrooms?"

"Dave just radioed and asked if we moved everything to the backyard. Have we? Is there anything else we need to move, just in case?"

"Just the guns in the rifle rack."

"I'll get them. Why don't you go to the shelter and get supper started? Do you have anything out?"

"The fish isn't frozen yet."

"Yuck. I'll have macaroni and cheese, thank you."

"No HEMP yet?"

"No Dave, no blinding light in the sky. Yank those radios and we'll put them in the shelter."

The radios were mounted on plates that allowed them to slide out of the mounts. Geena told Sheila to go to the shelter with her brothers and she'd be down in a minute. The radios, firearms, ammo and any fresh food were moved to the shelter.

"You aren't watching the news?"

"I figured you'd fill us in."

“Turn on the TV.”

We had a Direct TV satellite dish to receive our TV signal. Do you know who was behind Direct TV? Howard Hughes. Anyway, we had the package that cost \$35 per month. I didn't want to spend the extra money having high speed internet would cost. Now, about that HEMP; scientists determined that a low yield fission weapon could produce greater HEMPs than fusion weapons. We first learned about EMP from the Starfish Prime test detonated 400km above the Pacific that took out lights, etc. in Hawaii. A single 10kT fission device detonated 300 miles (480km) above the center of the US could wipe out all unprotected devices from coast to coast and border to border.

It would also take out most, if not all, low earth orbit satellites over a period of time. Don't worry about it if you lose Sirius Radio, your car probably won't start anyway. When we turned on the TV and switched to Fox News, the international logjam of news was broken and they were reporting on the situation in the Far East. North Korea had crossed the DMZ, invading South Korea. (They didn't comment on the M-14 and M-16 mines.) South Korea was falling back while US forces rushed northward to join them.

China had invaded Taiwan and the US Carrier aircraft were bombing the Chinese ships and both our submarines and aircraft were launching Harpoon missiles. (The Harpoon missile provides the Navy and the Air Force with a common missile for air, ship, and submarine launches. The weapon system uses mid-course guidance with a radar seeker to attack surface ships. Its low-level, sea-skimming cruise trajectory, active radar guidance and warhead design assure high survivability and effectiveness. The Harpoon missile and its launch control equipment provide the warfighter capability to interdict ships at ranges well beyond those of other aircraft.)

It appeared to the Fox Correspondent (Shep Smith) that the Chinese were losing. He went on to report that a portion of the CGs and DDGs were steaming north to intercept ICBMs in the boost phase, but that was unconfirmed. They can do that using the block IV-A SM-2 missiles, he said. Now we all know how China feels about losing anything and not just the money they invested in US Treasury Bills. Satellites revealed that they were getting their missiles ready to fly, you know, the ICBMs.

Before they could launch, Iran launched on Israel, opening another can of worms. Israel lifted off the small force of always nuclear-armed fighter bombers and launched Jericho III missiles at Iran. Next, a missile came over the pole and exploded at 320 miles over Kansas City and the lights went out. All we lost immediately was our old TV, it was fried. I'd disconnected the radio when Dave and his family arrived.

“Where's the macaroni and cheese, I'm hungry.”

“I fixed you some of the fish fillets from the grocery store. Now you can eat what the rest of us eat.”

“That was good fish; I hope that someday we can get more from the grocery store.”

“We have a lot of it in the freezer, so don’t worry.”

“But the only fish that we have a lot of in the freezer is Tilapia.”

“Bingo.”

“You didn’t have to trick me, you could have told me.”

“If I had, would you have eaten it?”

“Of course not.”

“I guess it would be fair to say that you left me little choice. Any radiation yet?”

“Nothing on the meters, but with communications out, they could wipe out the country and we wouldn’t know unless a bomb fell in our backyard.”

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We considered our options, concluding that until we had a reading on the CD V-700, the Geiger counter, we would be safe outside the shelter. Dave and I left with plastic ponchos on, just in case, and carrying the Geiger counter went to check on the livestock. We added an extra bale of hay for the horses and gathered the few eggs we found. I was truly concerned about the animals but more concerned about the safety of my family. It seemed to me that if we did get fallout, it might well come from Colorado Springs, Albuquerque or Oklahoma City.

The long and short of it was that I was getting too old for this chit. The only thing I felt I had going for me was 70 plus years of accumulated knowledge and not all of it on the computer. One thing for sure, at my age, I wasn’t worried about getting cancer from the fallout. We had medium duty Tyvek suits and the fancy Millennium gas masks from Approved Gas Masks with the CBRN filters and plenty of spare filters. I had picked that brand of mask because they came in small, medium and large. Spare filters came 6 to the case. As for footwear, there was nothing wrong with my goulashes (HazProof HD Chemical Boots).

You know how it goes if you’re a prepper; you don’t know what kind of hazard you have to prepare for, so you cover all of your bases. The only thing that limits most people is having the money, a persistent problem. However, you just do it a little at a time; we started with Beth and me and expanded it to include David and his family. When we couldn’t buy ammo, we traded for it and, once, stole it. And now, look at us, 3 .50BMG caliber rifles, enough assault weapons for a full Platoon or more, plus enough stored ammo for David’s lifetime.

Speaking of firearms, again, we didn't have any of those fancy 'elephant guns' like the Winchester model 70 in .458. I am convinced that the .50 caliber rifles would probably kill an elephant. However, this is still North America and the only elephants I'm aware of are in zoos or belong to circuses. But if those animal rights activists have their way, there'll be no more elephants in circuses. As far as I knew, the only company making a rifle in .458 Winchester was Remington in their model 798. There were two calibers, .375 H&H and .458 Winchester. Remington didn't sell .458 ammo, only Winchester did and they only had one load, 510gr Super-X Soft Point. Better to buy from someone like Buffalo Bore.

"I'm getting a reading on the 717."

"How high?"

"It's on the lowest range and the needle just lifted off zero. Write it down every 15 minutes, right?"

"That's right. After it has peaked, we'll plug it into that spreadsheet. I know there is a way to actually figure out the original reading and we should use that as the peak. I'll have to look for the yarn that explained how to do that. I do know that we have to be able to guess the location where it was detonated and how long it took the radiation to get here. That's why I have the weather station."

The radiation crept up slowly and peaked around 100R. We guesstimated the location based on the 'elapsed time' and wind speed. Then I plugged in 1,000R and compared the spreadsheet to our peak reading. I had to get up to 3,000R before the readings all fit. The location was Colorado Springs, not unexpected. Now, was the Cheyenne Mountain Complex toast or not? There had been speculation that a direct hit on the mountain above a certain size would destroy the shelter. The center was designed to withstand up to a 30 megaton blast within 1-nautical-mile (1.9 km).

The underground Combat Operations Center (COC) was originally intended to provide a 70% probability of continuing to function if a five-megaton nuclear weapon detonated three miles (5.6 km) away, but was ultimately built to withstand a multi-megaton blast within 1.5 nautical miles (2.8 km; 1.7 mi). It was also designed to be self-sufficient for brief periods, have backup communications and television intercom with related commands, house personnel during an emergency, and protect staff against fallout and biological and chemical warfare.

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Although the dissolution of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War and greatly reduced tensions between the United States and Russia (the Soviet Union's formal successor state), both nations remained in a "nuclear stand-off" due to the continuing presence of a significant number of warheads in both nations. Additionally, the end of the Cold War led the United States to become increasingly concerned with the development of nucle-

ar technology by other nations outside of the former Soviet Union. In 1995, a branch of the US Strategic Command produced an outline of forward-thinking strategies in the document "Essentials of Post-Cold War Deterrence".

The former chair of the United Nations disarmament committee states there are more than 16,000 strategic and tactical nuclear weapons ready for deployment and another 14,000 in storage. The US has nearly 7,000 ready for action and 3,000 in storage and Russia has about 8,500 on hand and 11,000 in storage, he said. China has 400 nuclear weapons, Britain 400, France 350, India 160, and Pakistan 60. North Korea is confirmed as having nuclear weapons, though it is not known how many (a common estimate is between 1 and 10). Israel is also widely believed to have nuclear weapons. NATO has stationed 480 US nuclear weapons in Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, and Turkey, with several other countries in pursuit of an arsenal of their own.

A key development in nuclear warfare in the 2000s has been the proliferation of nuclear weapons to the developing world, with India and Pakistan both publicly testing nuclear devices and North Korea conducting an underground nuclear test on October 9, 2006. The US Geological Survey measured a 4.2 magnitude earthquake in the area where the test occurred. Iran, meanwhile, has embarked on a nuclear program which, while officially for civilian purposes, has come under scrutiny by the United Nations and individual states.

Recent studies undertaken by the CIA cite the enduring India-Pakistan conflict as the most likely to escalate into nuclear war. During the Kargil War in 1999, Pakistan came close to using their nuclear weapons in case of further deterioration. In fact, Pakistan's foreign minister had even warned that they would "use any weapon in our arsenal", hinting at a nuclear strike against India; the statement was condemned by the international community with Pakistan denying it later on. It remains the only war between two declared nuclear powers. The 2001-2002 India-Pakistan standoff again stoked fears of nuclear war between the two countries.

Despite these very serious threats, relations between India and Pakistan have been improving somewhat over the last few years. A bus line directly linking Indian and Pakistani administered Kashmir has recently been established. But with the November 26, 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, India does not rule out war with Pakistan if the Pakistani government does not act on the perpetrators.

Another flashpoint which has analysts worried is a possible conflict between the US and the Chinese over Taiwan. Although economic forces have decreased the possibility of military conflict, there remains the worry that increasing military buildup and a move toward Taiwan independence could spin out of control.

A third potential flashpoint lies in the Middle East, where Israel is thought to possess between one and four hundred nuclear warheads (this has never been officially confirmed by Israel; however, Mordechai Vanunu, the former nuclear technician on whose 1986 revelations much of the above is based, was kidnapped by Mossad agents from Italy,

spent 18 years in detention on charges of “grave espionage”, and is still forbidden to leave Israel and is subject to severe restrictions – which tends to lend credence to what he told the British Sunday Times).

The Seniors – Chapter 27

It has been asserted that the submarines which Israel received from Germany have been adapted to carry missiles with nuclear warheads, so as to give Israel a Second strike capacity. Israel has been involved in wars with its neighbors on numerous occasions, and its small geographic size would mean that in the event of future wars the Israeli military might have very little time to react to a future invasion or other major threat; the situation could escalate to nuclear warfare very quickly in some scenarios. In addition, the fact that Iran appears to many observers to be in the process of developing a nuclear weapon has heightened fears of a nuclear conflict in the Middle East, either with Israel or with Iran's Sunni neighbors.

Now I ask you, how does that obviously dated piece compare to what's happening now? It is dated because Britain doesn't have 400 nukes anymore. The last I heard, they were cutting down from 200 to 160.

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Never mind the shelter stay; we could stay as long as we needed to. However, there were livestock to feed, eggs to gather, a fish tank to clean so I volunteered myself to handle those duties. I carried a dosimeter, wore the protective clothing and the whole nine yards. Apparently the livestock had better resistance to radiation than humans, none died. They were all in the barn so they didn't have any direct contact with the radiation. I'd wash myself down with a garden hose when I returned being careful to get it all off.

David would take my dosimeter and record the reading, keeping a separate log of my exposure. Finally, one day he said, "That's enough! The radiation is way down and I'll do the livestock from now on. You, sir, are remaining in the shelter."

I tried to find his log to see how much exposure I'd gotten and couldn't find it. Finally, I flat out asked him.

"150R, dad. Now, if you don't get any more exposure, over the 120 day period, you should be ok, provided you don't get cancer."

"What's the difference David? I mean I've lived my life and you have yours ahead of you."

"The difference is that at the current level of fallout radiation, I won't accumulate any appreciable amount of radiation, period."

He wouldn't be dissuaded and I was forced to give up. He did have one thing right; the readings he kept of his exposure wouldn't rise to my accumulated dosage for a long while, if ever. I didn't feel much different, my hair had been thinning for years and I had some nausea with no vomiting, probably that damned fish Beth kept cooking.

We ended up spending about 6 weeks in the shelter before David said that it was safe for everyone to come out and stay out. I can't remember being so tired, it was all I could do to keep going. My appetite which was usually good wasn't what it had been. Enough about my aches and pains, here's how things shook out.

David raised hams on the Yaesu radio after about three weeks. I noticed that the more the time passed, the greater the range he could reach. I assumed it had something to do with ionization of the atmosphere. With both beams and vertical antennas, we could hear several miles out and then move the beam until the signal maxed out. The destruction was widespread; most large metropolitan statistical areas had been hit in an apparent attempt to maximize civilian casualties. From what Dave said, it worked.

They had, indeed, nuked Cheyenne Mountain. Obama and the personnel stationed inside the mountain survived. The same couldn't be said for the residents of Colorado Springs, the Air Force Academy or Fort Carson. Denver had also been hit, with 2 nukes, perhaps the other two warheads in a 3 warhead MIRV. Few military installations were hit, only those with large numbers of personnel.

At one time the US had a program called Civil Defense and I never really understood why it had been abandoned. Wait, I remember, it was replaced with FEMA. Lord love a duck, we're doomed. There was a bright side though; you could buy used Civil Defense equipment from Radmeters4U, calibrated too!

I didn't really feel like rolling my own anymore and dug around in our stores. I knew that somewhere in all those boxes was a box filled with Kool's 100s that I'd purchased before the dollar a pack price hike. Don't get me wrong, there was plenty of Bugler regular tobacco so David could use the machine to roll his own. However, he left early one morning and, when he came back he was ears to ears smile. It didn't take long to find out what he was smiling about, he'd cornered the market on factory made cigarettes. Grand theft cigarettes; well, at \$42 a carton, it didn't take many cartons to make you a felon, like anybody cared. He'd worked over a tobacco store but good, leaving the grocery stores to the unprepared.

Considering those 150R I'd taken, I wasn't particularly worried about smoking. "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee; if the left one don't get you, the right one will." He stopped going by Cassius a long time ago. The last I heard, he wasn't doing well. An interesting sidelight to his career was his refusal to step forward when drafted. At the time, I thought his behavior was unacceptable. However, we mellow with time and I reviewed his case on Wiki. He applied for conscientious objector status. His draft board followed all the proper steps, contacting the Justice Department who had the FBI investigate, etc. They then held a hearing where the hearing officer recommended upholding his claim as he met at least one of the three criteria. The Justice Department wrote back to the Draft Board recommending that the status not be granted. He wouldn't step forward when inducted and was charged under the law.

It only took the jury 21 minutes to convict him and the 5th Circuit upheld the conviction. Ali appealed to SCOTUS where his conviction was reversed because he clearly met at least one if not two of the three criteria. Yet another case of our beloved government doing just exactly what it wanted, regardless of the law. But then, you could fill a very thick book recounting instances like that. Come to think of it, they didn't do so good providing for the common defense, did they? We had the beginning of the 2nd Revolution before the law got changed.

Need a job? The government now has thousands of vacancies between the Revolution and the GTW. The question is, how will they pay you, in FRNs? Forget it, insist on gold or silver and if they won't agree, tell them what they can do with their job.

"Are you losing weight?"

"I don't really know, I haven't weighed myself."

"Go do it, I need to know."

I had only lost 10 pounds, not enough to worry about in my opinion. I'd had a little nausea and so forth when we were still in the shelter.

"Yeah, but it's only a couple of pounds."

"It looks like you've lost more than that. Do you have any weakness? No bleeding gums or anything?"

"I'm fine Beth, just a little tired. I must have overdone."

"Overdone what? David is doing all the chores."

"Stop worrying, I'll be fine. Maybe I got a little too much radiation, but I haven't had any since and I believe it's okay to average your exposure as long as you don't get in large dose in a single exposure. I'll try getting a little exercise, we didn't get much while we sheltered."

"Will either you or David sit down and explain all you know about what is happening and what happened during the war?"

"I suppose we should, but he's been the one on the radio most of the time. He can give you an overall picture and I'll add anything I know."

"Where did he go when he took off the other day?"

"He went shopping."

"Shopping for what?"

“Tobacco products; he pretty much cleaned out a smoke shop.”

“You really should stop.”

“Et tu Brute? I’ve been smoking since I was 15 and it will be nearly 60 years in a couple of years. What’s the point?”

“Have you ever considered how much you’ve spent on cigarettes?”

“I haven’t added it up, but when I was in the Army, they only cost \$1.90 a carton.”

“And now they’re twenty times that.”

“You haven’t allowed for inflation. What cost \$1.90 in 1961 would cost \$13.03 in 2007. And, this is 2015 for crying out loud.”

“How do you figure?”

“There used to be a web calculator. As far as I’m concerned, my smoking isn’t open to discussion so long as I don’t smoke in YOUR house.”

“What do you mean MY house?”

“Well, if it was MY house, I could smoke in it.”

“Fine, but you’ll have to confine it to the basement with the door closed.”

What, you thought I didn’t smoke in the house because it was my idea? The trade off, from my viewpoint, was being allowed to pursue my hobby, gun collecting. Between what we’d bought and those we’d inherited from John, we might just have enough. Maybe.

“Dad said I was to give everyone an update based on what I’ve heard on the radio. I managed to pick up BBC a couple of times and Europe was hit as badly as we were. There is no news coming out of Russia, China, Iran, India, Pakistan or North Korea. As nearly as I can tell, our warships were able to knock down about half of the Chinese missiles in boost phase. We had so few missiles in Poland that all we could do was to intercept the Iranian missiles. Israel nuked the Iranians back to the Stone Age but didn’t come away scot-free. The Iranian missiles were erratic and the support they hoped to get from their Muslim neighbors failed to materialize. Apparently France failed to fire a single missile and received only a single strike. Britain didn’t fare as well, but only took about a dozen or so strikes for all of the British Isles.

“There is no effort being made to follow up on the Iranian strike of Israel because the Israelis finally announced their nuclear weapons count, 560, less those used on Iran.

Around the US, most major metropolitan centers were hit with one or more weapons, some might have been MIRVs. None of the six cities hit by the terrorist's years back when were hit again.

"FEMA is attempting to get organized but they have too few people and too many locations to cover. The only locations in our general area they hit were Kansas City and St. Louis. By the way, I don't know who 'they' are, it could have been either China or Russia, but my money is on Russia. The military is making an effort to do what they can to assist survivors and using those FEMA camps. However, they're not locking anyone in and are following the law carefully, unlike FEMA. Dad, do you have anything to add?"

"Yes I do. Your log showed that I accumulated about 150R. I've lost a small amount of hair, as you can see, and experienced some nausea. Beth asked me to weigh myself and I fibbed, telling her I'd only lost a couple of pounds, when in fact, I've lost 10 pounds. I don't want anyone to worry about me; I'm gradually starting to feel better. That much radiation could eventually lead to cancer, but at my age, it's not a concern. You're born, you live and you die, that's just life's cycle. I'm already at the life expectancy for a male. It's about time I put on my cowboy hat and spurs, mounted a horse and said, Ride, boldly ride and search for El Dorado."

"How's that go?"

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old,
This knight so bold,
And o'er his heart a shadow,
Fell as he found,
No spot of ground,
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength,
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow;
"Shadow," said he,
"Where can it be,
This land of Eldorado?"

"Over the mountains
Of the moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,

Ride, boldly ride,"
The shade replied,
If you seek for Eldorado!"

Edgar Allan Poe, 1849. James Caan omitted the second verse in the movie El Dorado.

The Seniors – Chapter 28

“That’s just plain foolishness,” Beth said. “But if you’re going I’m going too.”

“I wasn’t thinking about going any further than Springfield, Beth. I’d like to check on Joe and Mary, Chuck and Rob.”

“What do you figure 2 days up, 2 days there and 2 days back?”

“I’d guess that would be about right. I think our horses can walk at 4mph with a 4 beat walk. It’s around 60 miles give or take and we’d need to rest the horses every couple of hours.”

“What about our luggage?”

“We’ll pack it on a third horse, we won’t need that much, a coffee pot, Dutch oven or frying pan, and our set of camping plates, flatware and cup.”

“The blue enamel?”

“That’s what I had in mind. Maybe two changes of clothes, our rifles and revolvers. Say a six-day supply of food, just in case.”

“Anything particular you don’t want to eat?”

“No homegrown fish or rabbit.”

There wasn’t any way to keep either of those frozen, fortunately. Beth could take some Jiffy cornbread, some pork and beans, pancake mix, syrup and canned beef stew. The coffee and cocoa could go premeasured into plastic bags. We’d need the first aid kit, some feed for the horses and water and we could take our Katadyn water filter. Spare ammo could go in the saddle bags with a spare pistol or revolver.

We didn’t know where Joe and Mary lived and would have to find a phone book and hope their address was included in the listings. Zeroing our dosimeters and wearing them seemed prudent along with hauling the CD V-715 because I never trusted that NukAlert.

The trip was initially uneventful. We rode 2 hours and then gave the horses a rest and ate a snack. Two hours later we repeated the rest period and ate the lunch Beth had packed. That was followed by a mid-afternoon break and we stopped for the night around 2 hours later. We unsaddled and haltered the 3 horses. And then set up the tent and dug a fire pit. Beth cooked the cornbread in the Dutch oven and warmed a large can of pork and beans for supper. Dessert came in the form of those small cups of Jello.

We left earlier the next day and arrived in Springfield well before dark. Beth found a phonebook and we got Joe and Mary's address. There was no dial tone on the pay-phone, so we headed to their address. When we arrived, Joe was sitting on the front porch of their home with a shotgun on his lap and a rifle leaning against the wall. As you should recall, Joe had rifles in 7.62x51mm and 5.56x45mm. That silencer we supplied was on his .308.

"I didn't know you had horses."

"Quite a few although some are too young to ride. How did you two make out when we were nuked?"

"We did fine; we have a basement shelter and it was fairly well stocked with food. The Mountain house stuff ran out after 30 days and we were forced to eat beans and rice. Not bad to eat, but I forgot Beano. How did you folks make out?"

"Dave called and alerted us. We bedded the livestock, moved the perishables from the house to the shelter and got ready. When they showed up, we quickly unloaded necessary items from his pickup and trailer. We buttoned down, but I later went and checked on the livestock. We later got fallout, but I risked quick trips tending to the animals. That worked out because we didn't lose any."

"Why horses, won't your truck run?"

"It runs just fine Joe, but I think maybe I got too much radiation so while we were discussing what to do next, I said I was going on a trail ride."

"Well, unsaddle, pull that pack and we'll put the horses in the backyard. There enough grass to last them a day or two."

"Heard from Chuck or Rob?"

"We've heard from both of them. Chuck and his family stayed in our shelter and Rob came by after he could leave his shelter."

"Have you been shopping lately?"

"Many people came out of their shelters too early in order to loot the grocery stores. By the time we came out, the food was mostly gone. We have meat in the freezer and staples for about 3 months. It's going to be tough being one of the few with electricity and food supplies."

"I can hear your generator and so can others. You'd be better off moving down to our acreage than staying here. We're well stocked on food and have a huge garden. Does your truck run?"

“It does; it’s a pre electronic diesel with full tanks.”

“You’ve been to our place before, do you remember how to get there?”

“I do; we have an Airstream trailer I pull with the pickup. Only things we’d have to do are move the remaining food and freezer plus the guns and ammo.”

“What about your generator?”

“It will take some muscle power, but we can get into the pickup. How’s your supply of diesel?”

“I’ll have to calculate it. The generator is a Cummins DGCG 120/240 single phase and burns around 1.6 to 5.6gph. We were in the shelter for 6 weeks and have been out 4 days. During the shelter stay we were probably only running ¼ power so that’s 1,008 hours at 1.6gph plus 96 hours at 2.8gph. Call it 1,882 leaving, um, 28,118 gallons of stabilized diesel. Our farm tank holds 1,000 gallons of stabilized gas. By the way, the generator is configured to put out a maximum of 333 amps. We have 2 55 gallon drums of kerosene.”

“Enough juice for 3 homes?”

“At least 3, maybe 4 if we didn’t run air conditioning.”

“How do you heat your house?”

“We’re using a propane furnace; however, the original wood/coal burning furnace is sitting right next to it and we could switch back to conserve propane. That shouldn’t take more than an hour; the guy we bought the place from kept the old ducting.”

“Do you have coal or wood?”

“No coal and 100 cords of firewood. That kerosene I mentioned is for the oil lamps mounted on the walls in every room and on some of the tables. Beth bought a few 25 yard rolls of wick material so that base is covered.”

“It might be a good idea if I added a wood burning stove to the Airstream.”

“Would you have room?”

“It’s a 34’ Classic Limited but there’s little free floor space. We’d probably have to move the freezer to one of your buildings. The wood stove is a ‘maybe’ item depending on the size of the stove and my being able to rearrange a few things. It’s a humdinger and I really like the trailer. Heat is propane with electronic start. Six gallon electric hot water heater and 54 gallon water tank plus 39 gallon black water and 37 gallon grey water

tanks. It has a 50 amp electrical hookup and I installed a propane generator but don't use it much."

"Big enough to live in full time?"

"Shouldn't be a problem."

"What about Chuck and Rob?"

"If you have room, they could tow trailers down and use their own residential standby generators. Their generators are only rated at 100 amps, but they are diesel. Say, how's your supply of PRI-G and D?"

"Enough for the time being, but we'll need more in the future."

"Both of them have PRI-D, about 6 gallons between the two of them. I have some too, a full case of 6 one gallon jugs."

"Your 12 gallons and our 14 gallons will keep us going until we find more. I figure to use a portable 3 phase generator to power gas station pumps and empty their diesel tanks. We're going to need to find a tanker of some kind."

"Hell, drive along I-44 for a ways, you'll find one."

"I'd thought about it; however we've only been out of the shelter for 4 days including the 2 we took to ride up here."

"Do you want me to find some more PRI Products?"

"If you can, sure. I won't use Sta-bil in my fuel, but you're free to use it yours."

"We will be down sometime next week. You'll stay for dinner and spent the night?"

"I had hopes, thank you."

"Why the lever action and not the M1A?"

"The only way the M1A fits in the scabbard is sans magazine. I'm even wearing my cowboy boots and spurs."

"So I see. Well let's go inside and see if the two of them have solved all of the planet's problems."

"That may be a bit hard even for our Wonder Women."

“There should be a large supply of coal here in Springfield somewhere. We could find a dump truck or two and haul it down to Branson before winter.”

“That may come sooner than you think; do you remember the TTAPS study?”

“That nuclear winter thing?”

“Yes.”

“I thought that’s been re-studied and they drew different conclusions.”

“Could be, I don’t really know. Regardless, we should know soon, if it starts snowing.”

Joe said that they would check around the Springfield area and try to come up with coal and wood stoves. I looked in their phone book and couldn’t find any coal dealers. The good coal was either the anthracite from Pennsylvania or low sulfur sub-bituminous coal from Wyoming. I had a feeling that we would end up burning wood. We left the next morning, staying only one night rather than two. It took the same two days to get home, but we were home a day early.

“You’re back early.”

“I talked to Joe and they’re going to pull their Airstream down here. We need to set up three spots for trailers with sewer, water and propane. Can we come up with 3 more 1,100 gallon propane tanks and the plumbing?”

“I think so, what about the fuel?”

“Titan Propane in Branson.”

“I’ll look there first for tanks.”

“Good. Joe has a small propane fueled generator so we can hook him into our grid. Chuck and Rob have diesel fueled Residential Standby generators. Joe said he’d look for coal in and around Springfield, but there weren’t any Yellow Pages listings. The only source I can think of is that new coal fired generating plant they put online about 5 years ago. It’s somewhere on the Southwest side of town.”

The Seniors – Chapter 29

“Are we going to switch you back to the old furnace?”

“I think we will because if we do that, our 1,000 or so gallons of propane will only be used for the hot water heater and the kitchen stove. As far as that goes, we can always move that wood burning kitchen stove in from the back patio and store the propane stove somewhere.”

“We’ll go looking the first thing in the morning. You know, you do look a little better, I guess that trail ride agreed with you.”

“It was fun David.”

“No banditos?”

“Not this time. That doesn’t mean we’ll never see any.”

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Long story short, we found several 1,100 gallon propane tanks with cradles, loaded and hauled all of them back home. We set them in place and returned to find a delivery truck. We filled it and drove it out to fill the tanks. That done, we picked up another load to top off our tanks. On our last trip to Titan, we topped off the truck we were using plus their second truck. I left a note nailed to the door explaining what we’d done and told them where they could find their tanks.

From there, we went shopping for plumbing and electrical supplies and in the process, borrowed a trencher from a rental place. Since I didn’t know how wide the other trailers would be, we allowed a bit of extra space between the sites. They were made available on a first come, first served basis and while Chuck and Rob had some older 14’ wide singlewide mobile homes, Joe and Mary only had their Airstream. Working on one trailer per day, we had all three ready to live in by the end of the third day. Since Joe and Mary’s trailer could stand alone, it was hooked up last and connected to our generator. The grey water and black water tanks were plumbed into the sewer line, the water line connected to the water tank using a hose and a flexible high pressure line run from the propane tank to their Airstream. His residential standby was stored for future use.

I don’t know if it was the exercise I got when we put in the system and hooked them up or the multi-vitamin I started taking, but I actually felt better. We kept the livestock on the baled hay for the time being and decided, as a group, to try and find more hay and mixed livestock feed. While David, Joe and I did that, Rob and Chuck went shopping on I-44. They were willing to bring back anything that would aid in our long term survival; food, fuels, even an M1A2 Abrams tank if they happened across one sitting on a HET.

We located a large supply of small bale hay plus corn, oats, soybeans, barley and a hammer mill. With that, we could produce our own livestock feed, powering the hammer mill with the tractor's PTO shaft. As they began hauling in food trailers, we opened each one and examined the contents. Anything that couldn't handle cold weather was moved into the ammo bunker. It was the only place we had to put it and since nobody lived in there, we could use a kerosene heater to keep it above freezing. We wanted just enough heat to keep the bunker around 45-50°. That meant finding more kerosene or perhaps Jet Fuel A. Improvise. Adapt. Overcome. Add 'em up, a gun bunker behind the bookcase, ammo bunker/cold cellar and 7 bunker/foxholes.

Since the temperature hadn't fallen, yet, we were able to empty the wet goods into the bunker without having a heater. Our concern was carbon monoxide. The bunker dimensions were 60' long by 24' wide or 1,440ft². We picked up a 75,000 BTU Buddy ProAir. It would heat up to 1750ft² and run up to 11 hours on the 6-gallon fuel tank on low setting. It had an adjustable heat control (built-in thermostat). The heater shut off with loss of flame or power supply and supplies instant heat. It is economical, efficient and clean burning with continuous ignition. And, while we were at Tractor Supply, we picked up 3 43,000 BTU wood/coal heaters made by United States Stove Co.

We divided the firewood evenly among the five families. When Chuck and Rob stopped checking I-44, they began to haul dump truck loads of coal from the new power plant. The truck held 5 yards of coal and there was a coal room in our basement. If the others wanted to burn coal, they would have to haul it from the coal pile in a pail. Apparently Chuck or Rob figured that out and brought 4 garden carts that could hold several scoop loads. And then, a question came out of the blue.

"Honey you do look better; however your cheeks have a hollow look, are you watching you weight?"

"You want me to check again?"

"Please. It might be nothing but we still get trace radiation on the CD V-700."

"Damn, she was right; I was down another 8 pounds. I hadn't thought much about it because I really was feeling better. Still, I had to take my belt in another notch and my cartridge belt one notch too. The only way to get checked out was to drive up to Springfield. However, I had an excuse; one of those transports on I-44 was carrying medical supplies and I was pretty sure they'd need them in Springfield. After we sorted out a few things that would come in handy, we loaded the supplies in my pickup and trailer and headed for Springfield. We took the supplies to Cox Medical Centers South. After some orderlies unloaded the supplies, Beth and I went to the ER where, after a 2 hour wait, they moved me back to actual ER from the waiting room. A harried looking doctor introduced himself and asked, "How much radiation were you exposed to?"

"Around 150R over the course of about 40 days."

“That’s a little higher (3.75R) than the maximum daily exposure of 2.5R about 150%. We’ll do a blood draw first and get a CBC, and a full set of tests. My first impression is you’re suffering from a mild case of radiation poisoning but we’ll have a better idea after I get the lab results. Did you hear that some Good Samaritan (Gospel of Luke, chapter 10, verses 25–37) delivered a large load of medical supplies?”

“What about it?”

“We were getting low on everything and those supplies might be exactly what you need. Do you take vitamins?”

“I didn’t until recently but I am now.”

“I’ll get a lab tech to draw blood, give him 15-20 minutes to show up, we’re a bit short handed.”

He left for about five minutes and returned. “The lab tech is on his way.”

“Doc, Beth and I are EMTs-Intermediate. Unless I need to be hospitalized, we can do home care.”

“Do you have any equipment or supplies?”

“A portion of those supplies we....yeah, I think so; if a full bottle of aspirin and a box of Band-Aids are okay?”

“Portion of those supplies? What did you hold back?”

“We kept some 2cc syringes with needles, normal saline, D5W, Ringers, IV sets and some streptomycin. We also took one vial of morphine sulfate and one bottle each of Tylenol 3 and Tylenol 4. Our first aid kit is above average and contains Cipro and Doxy.”

“Anything else?”

“Not from those supplies but we have some 50mg Benadryl capsules for allergies and/or sleep.”

“If you run into a problem you can’t handle, try to get here ASAP.”

“We live south of Branson.”

45 minutes later...

“Your RBC is down a little but I don’t see anything to be worried about.”

“Right, take two aspirin and call you in the morning?”

“Only if your symptoms worsen. The nurse will be giving you a shot of B-12. Anything else? If not, I have patients waiting. By the way, thanks for the supplies.”

“Thanks doc.”

One of the many functions of B-12 relates to blood production. I got the shot and went to pay for the visit, lab and shot. My ER chart was marked, ‘NO CHARGE’. Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth, we said ‘thank you’ and left. A CBC stands for a complete blood count, generally done by a lab machine these days and is a good indicator of what type of problem you may have. Especially in the days following a GTW.

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I guess it’s fair to say I’ll live until I die in about 25 years, give or take. When we got back home, I had to explain several times that I didn’t seem to have one foot in the grave and the other on a banana peel. In fact, I got my cowboy boots, western belt buckle, hat and weapons. After which I listened to the shadow and went riding. However, it wasn’t a joyride; I was looking for and noting the locations of standing dead trees. Beth came too and we took turns mapping and marking the trees we’d fell as soon as we found time. I had two chainsaws, both Stihl MS460 Magnums; one with a 16” bar and one with a 32” bar.

“I set out some lean ground beef. Any idea what you want for supper? Goulash, spaghetti with meat sauce, SOS or chili?”

“Uh...”

“Or, I can make hamburgers.”

“Chili.”

“I didn’t soak pinto beans, I’ll have to use those canned chili beans”

“That will be fine Beth. I’m going over to David’s and see if they eaten. If not, maybe they can join us.”

“Either way, I’ll make a large batch; we can eat leftovers”

“Have you eaten?”

“Where have you been?”

“Marking standing dead trees; your mother helped. Now she’s making a large pot of chili and I wondered if you wanted to join us.”

“We haven’t eaten yet, I’ll check with Geena. Geena, what’s for supper?”

“I took out chops, but they haven’t thawed.”

“Mom and dad are having chili, care to join them?”

“Sure, that solves one problem. I’ll get the kids to clean up and we’ll be over.”

Dave and I went to the big house and sat down in the living room.

“Are you sure you’re ok?”

“How many times do I have to tell you I am?”

“Until I believe you, I guess.”

“I’m just a little anemic. That’s why they gave me the shot of B-12. They were sure happy to have the stuff Chuck and Rob salvaged from that truck. They didn’t charge us anything for the visit, lab or shot.”

“I’ve never lived through a GTW, what now?”

“Nobody has ever lived through a GTW except for the Japanese. I’d be speculating, but here goes. First off, we don’t need to clean out an armory for weapons or ammo. Second, we have accumulated a large stock of both food and fuel, plus taken the time to make sure the food that would be harmed by freezing won’t freeze. Third, we have an alternate source of heat and it’s a renewable resource. I’m the only one really set up to burn coal although the rest of you can if you want. Fourth, we have 2 acres available for the garden and depending on whether or not we experience a so called nuclear winter we may be able to grow more food.”

“You don’t believe we’ll have a nuclear winter?”

“I didn’t say that, I said ‘if’. I’m not really sure, but it feels colder than normal for this time of year. A disaster of this scope is going to bring out the good and bad in people. Some may not be able to cope at all and pretty much give up. Others, like us, will fumble along doing what they think is the right thing to do, recovering what’s available to us and sharing with others, needs be. The third group is what worries me. There will be a certain element that will prefer to take rather than doing for themselves. They may prey on others and enjoy the fruits of their labors. That’s, in part covered by the tunnel and foxholes we constructed to keep the feds at bay.”

The Seniors – Chapter 30

Geena and the kids showed up and Dave and I dropped the subject. Geena helped Beth with the cornbread and the chili and cornbread were soon ready to eat. Ben said grace and we dug in. My appetite was a bit better, just thinking about the visit to the doctor. As I ate, I contemplated how much Geena had changed. She had gone from a gun fearing whatever to being able to handle any firearm we had and using it well. She was now schooling Sheila on the subject of firearm safety and had a 10/22 set back as her first rifle.

Geena continued to carry the Bushmaster with the M203 attached. The full load out for a grenadier in the Army is 7 magazines and 36 grenades. With her stature, we'd cut her down to 18 grenades with more available in a separate carry bag should she run out. (The HEDP rounds weighed around ½ pound each.) The only outward difference between the HE round and the HEDP round was the shape of the nose with the HEDP being more rounded. Both were gold colored with green bodies. She also carried the Glock 17 everywhere she went. Beth had told me that when Sheila was old enough for a 'big' rifle, she'd give her the HK 416 and switch to a M1A loaded.

"Look out the window, it's snowing."

Two things had happened. One, our pasture had turned into a parking lot containing tankers and grocery delivery trucks. They looked for, but never found, solar panels, charge controllers, inverters or batteries. Two, it started to snow something awful. The bottles and cans subject to freezing were all safely tucked away in the bunker and it was time to fire up the kerosene heaters. We found Jet-A at Springfield-Branson National Airport, SGF, and transported it back to the acreage in 55-gallon drums, 6 in a pickup and 6 in a trailer.

"You guys need to use that Ford tractor to move some snow. Get a grain scoop and shovel paths to each trailer and the buildings."

"Dad, the snow is wet and very heavy. We'll do it, but don't look for it to happen in just a few minutes."

"I was just saying..."

"We'll do it, don't get your bloomers in a knot."

"David, we only have a 58 day supply of kerosene running the heater at its lowest setting. Someone is going to have to find a way to get more kerosene or Jet-A."

"But, the roads have to be very bad and we'd need a snowplow to get all of the way to the airport."

We had an empty 10,000 gallon tanker in the pasture not far from the homestead. If they could get that to the airport, we'd have over a year's supply of Jet-A.

Unlike that fellow on Frugal's, we didn't know how this would end because we were writing the book as we went along. As far as the kerosene was concerned, we got a break in the weather for a few days, allowing us to move that tanker to the airport and fill it with Jet-A. I rode along, mostly out of curiosity, and from the looks of the area in general, I had serious doubts that we'd be attacked by the third group I'd mentioned to David.

Because we had ample room in the house, we gathered there about every 3-4 days to discuss any news that had been picked up and our general state of well-being there on the 10 acres. Water wouldn't be a problem for the garden; provided the snow melted and it warmed up substantially. I did a people count one evening and we had 17 people consisting of: Beth and me; Joe and Mary; David's family of 5; Rob and Chuck's families of 4 each. The youngest person was Sheila at age 6.

There is one thing I can tell you about this crowd, everyone who understood what it actually meant considered him/her-self a patriot, through and through. Sheila claimed she was also a patriot although she didn't know what it meant. While we all had 'winter' coats, what we really needed was some of those 1960s era military parkas with the wolf fur around the hood. The closest thing we knew of was THE NORTH FACE Men's McMurdo Down Parka and we couldn't find any. What we did find was almost better, the N-3B parka that was developed for crew personnel subjected to extreme cold climates. It was mainly issued to air crews assigned to troop transports, helicopters and strategic bombers.

Did we need N-3B parkas in southern Missouri just north of the Arkansas state line? Absolutely! It was frequently well below zero at night and might warm up to zero during the day. Worse still was the wind and its effect or the 'wind chill factor'. According to the chart I copied from you know where, if the temperature was minus 15°F and the wind was blowing 40mph, the WCF was minus 50°F. Even at low winds like 10mph, minus 15°F would feel like minus 35°F. The prevailing wind was generally 10mph.

It got so cold that first winter that we had to put a 175,000 BTU kerosene heater (from Tractor Supply) in the barn. According to the literature, this Buddy ProAir would heat up to 4,250ft² and run up to 10 hours on the 14-gallon fuel tank on low setting. But, it was like assembling a jig-saw puzzle. A second heater, which burned more kerosene in less time meant that we'd have to watch our supply of Jet-A very closely. We learned one thing from that, it wasn't putting out enough (or any) CO to kill the livestock. Plus, we didn't have to keep the barn a cozy 70°. The livestock, excluding the fish, generated some of their own heat and the fish tank was heated and maintained around 85°.

We muddled through that dreadful winter, only leaving the acreage out of necessity, like if we needed more Jet-A. However, that was only an example, because we only burned about 9,500 gallons of the Jet-A. At the lowest setting, I had calculated that we could

get by with 8,404 gallons for 180 days. That proved to be not quite warm enough and we burned some extra in the barn. Necessity came in the form of another trip to Springfield to get another shot of B-12 plus a vial so Beth could administer more as needed. The doctor gave her specific instructions which she chose not to share with me.

Next question, did the winter actually last 6 months, as in 180 days? And then some although in the later period it was beginning to warm and the snow was melting off the roads. Since we had several drums of Jet-A and kerosene, we waited until the tanker was empty before venturing north to refill it. If you're at all familiar with the area, you know that the airport is northwest of Springfield. There was also Jet-A available at Downtown Airport, 3DW, should you wish to risk it. We didn't.

After we returned from our trip to the airport, Joe cornered me and asked if I like to ride along with him to Springfield. He said it wasn't anything special, he just wanted to check on things. I told him I'd need a few minutes to change out of my cowboy duds into something more appropriate. I put on 5.11 TDU pants and long sleeved Tactical shirt, work boots, a heavy jacket and got my Kimber plus my Super Match. I put 6 hand grenades in a shoulder bag a grabbed one LAW rocket. It wasn't that I was expecting trouble; it was more like I wanted to be ready if something happened.

Springfield had a pre-war population of maybe 190,000. Springfield had a reputation of having the most varied weather in the nation, which was in keeping with our little snow storm. The only true face to face shootout in the Wild West happened there during July 1865. Springfield helped give birth to the Wild West era when the town square was the site of the nation's first-recorded (and probably only) shootout, a 'quick draw' duel between Wild Bill Hickok and Davis Tutt Jr. at high noon. Tutt fired a shot at Hickok from 75 yards away, barely missing his head. Hickok fired back and killed Tutt with a bullet through the heart.

Anyway, if the population was as many as 57,000, only 30% of the previous level, I would truly be surprised. It appears that several things had happened. Some people got a dose of radiation from the fallout and died. Some others apparently succumbed to other illnesses, like cholera, etc. Some had obviously starved to death, either unable to find food or get out of their homes. Springfield had a distinct odor of death, regardless of the source. The few people that we actually saw scurried away perhaps put off by my rifle.

"Mighty strange, Dave. Darned few people and those we see are afraid of their own shadow."

"Maybe there are new PTB in town. Bad guys perhaps?"

"I suppose it could be, but I doubt it. We weren't the only patriots in the area and any bad guys would have to have gone up against them. A lot them were what you might call invisible shooters, if you get my drift."

“Some of Dave’s handy work?”

“Exactly. I wonder if the old rules still apply. I think not, but screw them if they can’t take a joke.”

“Try telling that to some judge.”

“If they can find one. If they live through meeting me. If, if, if. You know Dave, most of my adult life I lived in fear that some idiot would finally launch their nuclear arsenal. When there were just the big five, it was bad enough; then we got the smaller players, India, Pakistan, North Korea and obviously Iran. That made ten because I always took it for granted that the Israelis had the bomb. I never once believed that Israel would use their weapons except in retaliation because to do so would remove the ambiguity. Man did they relish the ambiguity. Now, I just wonder if we will get to your place in one piece. But, I had to see it for myself. I was born and raised here, leaving only when I needed to. Came back and have been here ever since.”

“Beth and I both worked here in Springfield until we retired. With our age difference we were able to retire at the same time. We had that property and it was paid off, greatly limiting our expenses. My only hobby was collecting guns. I had several before we retired and after, we had more money to spend. Somewhere along the line we got into the prepper mindset. Now, mind you, it wasn’t that we expected anything in particular to happen so our preparations were broad based. One of the selling points for that acreage was the bomb shelter, fully completed and the diesel generator. Mind you, although he only had 1,000 gallon of diesel fuel, the tank would hold 30,000 gallons.”

“One of those industrial sized tanks for truck stops?”

“I think so. We eventually got it filled after the price fell. You remember how it was back when Obama was first elected.”

“He asked for a trillion and had to settle for 800 billion, which proved to be less than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the money he actually needed. Then that AWB and the insurrection. You had a run in with the law as I recall.”

“Several times; the first time it was US Marshals and second some those ninja suited ATF guys. It was like something out of John Ross’s book. They came back two more times and found nothing illegal.”

“What’s he going to say when he comes out of Cheyenne Mountain?”

“Iran wouldn’t listen? I remember watching those first newscasts he held, he wasn’t slick Willy once he was sworn in. He had to think about his glib answers out of fear that what happened to his predecessor might happen to him. He could have sent Hillary to negotiate with North Korea and instead she went to reassure our allies. I wonder if the Taiwanese are reassured now.”

“I guess I’ve seen enough. Is there anything that you want to see?”

“Me? No, I mainly came along to ride shotgun. It made me feel useful. When we were up here getting that second vitamin shot it didn’t feel like this. That was only what, two weeks back. You know that the doc gave Beth a vial of B-12 and instructions but she hasn’t shared them with me. The label says B-12 Plus Inj. and since she’s supposed to inject it PRN, Pro re nata, or take as needed; she’s holding out on me.”

“Do I detect a note of discord?”

“We’re both EMT-Intermediates and giving an injection as needed isn’t a big deal. So, I have a little anemia, big deal.”

“You know, it may just be a big deal, are you sure the doctor told you everything?”

“There couldn’t be much to tell, he did blood work and I saw the results, my RBC was below normal.”

“You’ve had that before?”

“Yes, when I got a bleeding ulcer. No problems there, I’m taking Nexium.”

“Radiation sickness?”

“I had a little, but Dave stopped me when I had ½ of a lethal dose. The only thing that comes to me is the fact that I averaged 3¾R per day instead of 2½R per day. However, my total exposure was only 150R in 40 days. I didn’t ingest any radiation; I had a gas mask with a CBRN filter. I was also wearing a Tyvek suit, boots and gloves. Before I re-entered the shelter or took the suit off, I washed it all down with a garden hose.”

“Are you still keeping track?”

“Yes, I’m now wearing this. It’s a Victoreen Model 252. Dave checks it every night and notes it in that log he has.”

“What’s the range?”

“Two hundred mR, double the appropriate hourly dose.”

“Have you maxed it out?”

The Seniors – Chapter 31

“Surely not, David would have said something.”

“We’re back.”

“We’ve been talking since Springfield? It seems like I haven’t said anything.”

“Nonetheless, here we are.”

“Ok, let me get my artillery and I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“But tonight is the meeting.”

“Tonight? Well, then, see you later.”

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“I must have dozed off. What’s for supper?”

“It’s 11pm Dave. You slept through supper and the meeting. Do you want me to reheat the chili?”

“I am a little hungry. I don’t ever remember sleeping through supper.”

“Joe said you fell asleep on the way back from Springfield and he didn’t have the heart to tell you.”

“Wait a minute before you heat the chili. What is going on here? The doctor gives you a vial of B-12 with instructions, but the instructions are a secret? I fall asleep riding in a pickup and sit down to rest my eyes and fall asleep again? How bad is my anemia?”

“Ok, two injections per week until the vial is close to empty and we go back to Springfield for more blood work. We keep that up until your blood is back to normal, or close. They don’t have a large supply of B-12 and may have to switch you to B-12 plus C or an oral medication. That oral isn’t as effective so he’s going to continue the shots as long as he can.”

“Thank you. I can eat the chili cold.”

“I’ll heat it. Do you want a cup of cocoa?”

“Please. Beth, I’ve been feeling better, I just don’t understand.”

“It’s those shots. Honestly, he didn’t indicate that this was something that you wouldn’t get over, just that it would take time. Remember neither one of us are spring chickens

anymore. At our age the body just takes longer to heal. We think you over did it on the exposure to radiation and some people take a year or more to fully recover. He just said to maintain your diet, give you the shots and see that you got some exercise. He also asked if you smoked, but I ignored that question; I'm sure he could smell the smoke on your clothes."

"Do you really think taking away one of my few pleasures would make a big difference?"

"Not after 60 years of poisoning yourself, no. That's why I didn't respond. Forcing you to stop now might do more harm than good; the last thing you need is to be depressed more than you are."

"Back when I started smoking, a lot of people smoked. It was before the Surgeon General decided that smoking was bad for you. I started in 10th grade although at the time you had to be 18 to buy cigarettes. I think I was paying around \$5-6 a carton. The first brand I smoked was Kent with their Micronite filter. Then when I went in the Army I switched to Pall Mall to get more bang for the buck. I know it's an addiction, but it has to be the most powerful addiction there is for an over the counter product. Thank you for not saying anything to the doctor."

"You chili is hot, eat."

"How come you never started?"

"It wasn't considered lady like in my circle of friends and frankly, they stink."

"And, you kept you mouth shut about it for 45 years."

"You went along with my request that you not smoke in the house so I ignored it until we had that argument a while back over your house/my house. I gave in a little but now the basement stinks."

"Thank you."

"More chili?"

"Yes please. Is there anymore cocoa?"

"I warm the water back up. That's one thing were not short of. Did you realize that we have 3 of those 50 pound bags of cocoa?"

"I must have miscounted; I remember ordering another bag shortly before the war."

"That won' be a problem, it's going to be hard to come by. That's going to be our new time dividing line isn't it, before the war and after the war."

“Well, the other division BC/AD was tied to the birth of Christ and they were off by 6 years. They replaced BC/AD with BCE/CE. Maybe we’ll now use AB and PB representing Ante Bellum and Post Bellum.”

“That chili was good; did you make it from scratch?”

“Have you checked our supply of pinto, small pink and kidney beans?”

“A lot?”

“You have no idea. I have some Beano salted away if you need it.”

“I’m past that stage, maybe my stomach finally got the enzymes adjusted.”

“Good ahead and finish your cocoa, I’m turning in. The ground is drying out and might be warm enough in a week or two to start plant our garden.”

“We’re going to have a lot more help with that this year; that will sure be nice.”

“Keep one thing in mind Dave, not everyone will have the seeds or be able to plant a garden. We’ll use up our supply of hybrid seeds and use a few of the heirloom varieties.”

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Beth had started some of the plants in peat pots scattered around the living room, mostly peppers and tomatoes. I finished the cocoa and joined her in bed; ending up sleeping until 9am. Before I nodded off, I recalled our cornering the market on canning jars years earlier. We still had them all but didn’t use the ones with chipped rims. About every other year, she had ordered one case and occasionally two of the regular lids. A case contained 60 dozen lids. She had also picked up more jars to replace those we could no longer use.

Each year we grew large quantities of plum tomatoes for sauce. A few years of experimentation had resulted in a superior Italian style sauce for spaghetti, lasagna, etc. She had row after row of plum tomato starts to plant, if the weather cooperated. These were a short season hybrid plants, the last of that kind of seed we had. Initially, planting was put off due to the wet soil. It was warm enough, but wet to the point of being muddy meaning we couldn’t till. The plants were transferred to large peat pots and set outside. They continued to grow while the garden continued to dry off. When we were able to till, the presence of so many extra hands helped, we planted the same day.

Over the course of 3 days, we had everything in the ground and Beth and the others started sorting through the jars setting aside any with chipped rims. We had extra pressure canners, although few were the large All American canners. Since we had two of

those huge 41.5 quart canners, there were more than enough once they began harvesting.

The continued B-12 shots, the trips to Springfield to see the doctor and the exercise I was getting helping out was slowly restoring my health. As we burned up diesel fuel the empty tankers were moved to a large parking lot in Branson and parked. Chuck and Rob went further afield looking for more fuel, food and anything we could use. They eventually found a semi loaded with solar panels and all the components to allow us to install a huge solar array. They brought back pre-fab buildings to store the batteries, charge controllers and inverters. The power output was wired in to replace our electricity from the grid and the generators got their first extended rest in months. They called it their 'million dollar find'.

With proper attention and maintenance, a 1,800rpm diesel generator should run for anywhere between 1½ years and 2 years; although 2 years may be stretching it. You'll go through a lot of oil and filters during that time. When we bought the place and moved the filters and oil to the generator room, there was nearly a full case of filters and 3 or 4 cases of oil. Over the years, I had added additional filters and 55 gallon drums of oil, storing the oil anywhere I could find a little space.

PB, we had adopted a salvaging mentality because manufactured goods would be in short supply for a long time, maybe forever. Dave took to riding along with Chuck and Rob, riding shotgun and driving the pickup if they managed to find two trucks in a single day. We were keeping our inventory on a spreadsheet because none of the programs out there seemed to fill our needs. They'd handle food just fine, but we maintained an inventory that included everything, including oil, filters, ammunition and every kind of manufactured goods.

Once delivered to the acreage every truck had to be inventoried, the contents noted and entered into the spreadsheet on a laptop computer. We left that to the teens. Once in the spreadsheet, items were categorized and like items stored in different trailers, a burdensome task. It eliminated looking for one particular item in 4 or 5 different trailers however. Medical supplies were sorted through for anything we wanted and the remainder delivered to Cox Medical Centers South. I'm not sure, but I believe that our small group has free medical care for life.

o

Lest you think that I was developing Alzheimer's or dementia, let me set the record straight. I had a bad case of anemia which contributed to my being off times very fatigued. No firm conclusions were revealed to me about the source of the anemia, so it could have been anything. PB, doctors tended to cut to the heart of a matter and give you what you needed to recover and didn't waste much time explaining.

Over the course of this summer, they pretty much exhausted the available goods on I-44. They found a Cummins generator the same model as ours (DGCG) with a 3 phase

alternator and began emptying gas station diesel tanks and gasoline tanks. They recovered and stored 32,000 gallons of Jet-A for the heaters. And, on weekends, they cut down the standing dead trees hauling them back as logs to be cut down and spit into firewood. A large supply of propane fuel was pinned down in Springfield. There were several dealers who sold retail plus AmeriGas who sold wholesale and retail.

We were picking up hams from all over the US, BBC which operated from an alternate location, and some hams were speaking languages we didn't understand. There were obviously people besides us who had survived the war, in most countries. We compiled the news, sharing it at our twice weekly meetings. However, our government didn't appear to be functioning. The NWS was gone and I didn't have a current Farmer's Almanac. Regardless, we had a successful harvest.

Farmers in the area who grew grains like corn, oats, soybeans, barley or hay also had good crops because of the ample moisture. We made trades, battering off food, fuel and sometimes ammo for their crops. We'd lost our Vet during the war and birthing the calves, foals and pigs fell onto us. After a shaky start, we learned enough to manage, barely.

"I have a question."

"What do you need to know Rob?"

"We all have running vehicles. Why are you growing a large herd of horses and why can't we use our vehicles more?"

"Horses are a renewable resource. Sure, we have plenty of fuel for the moment and thanks to Chuck and you, it's stabilized with Power Research Products (PRI). Vehicles will breakdown and/or wear out. Has anyone given any thought to recovering any new vehicles? If so, forget it, you're too late. Every vehicle that could be made to run in the area is in possession of a new 'owner'. You might find parts this early, but what parts will you need? Brake parts come to mind, as do glow plugs and injectors. Your transmission wasn't subject to EMP, but how many of you can rebuild a transmission? Look for parts and take what you can find; but while you're at it, we could use saddles, bridles, saddlebags, lariats, scabbards, halters, and harnesses to pull buggies and wagons."

"Do you want wagons and buggies too if we can find them?"

"That's a good idea. Check museums and keep an eye out for Amish people."

0The Seniors – Chapter 32

Missouri's Amish population has been among the fastest-growing nationwide. There are an estimated 5000 Amish in Missouri, with the largest settlements at Jamesport (120 households, begun 1953), and others at Clark (established 1954, 135 households), Stanberry (about 30 families in the past three years, mostly from Iowa and Michigan) and Seymour (where observance is more strict and conservative than elsewhere in the US, and tourists are not especially wished-for). Although the Amish have been in the state since 1850 or earlier, the oldest existing settlement is Bowling Green (begun 1948 with 11 households, now 65), with smaller groups near Mt. Vernon, Kirksville and Windsor, and new settlements appearing periodically. Far from dying out, as has long been predicted, the Amish have doubled their population in the last twenty years, due to high birth rates and a far greater percentage of young Amish now making their permanent, adult commitment to the church, despite the increasing difficulty of earning a living from small-scale, low-technology farming.

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Seymour wasn't that far away, being Northeast of Springfield. The Amish were very self-sufficient. I couldn't think of anything we'd have to trade, except livestock. Since the group at Seymour was ultra conservative and didn't welcome outsiders (English) this could prove to be most difficult. When in Rome, do as the Romans...

"You look just like an Amish farmer."

"I hope so. That bunch in Seymour doesn't care for the English. Plus, I don't speak their language. My best hope is to appeal to their Christian charity and get them to agree to some kind of exchange."

"Good luck."

"Ready to go Joe?"

"Do I look as out of place as you do?"

"Two peas from the same pod."

"So, we're going to tow a horse trailer up to where?"

"West of Seymour. Then we'll saddle up and ride to their community."

"No guns?"

"No obvious guns. Take a .45 auto and put it in an IWB holster in the pit of your back."

"I feel stupid dressed like this."

"I do too. We have to do whatever it takes to learn to be able to work with this group. We'll have to be 99.44% honest with them."

"What's the 0.56%?"

"We won't mention the guns."

"Why not just put them in the saddle bags?"

"Good idea."

"May we get down?"

"You are not of the order?"

"English."

"Why then do you dress like us?"

"We did not want to offend you."

"Why are you here, we don't make trinkets for tourists."

"To trade, if that would be permitted."

"What do you wish to trade for?"

"Horse drawn wagons and buggies."

"Harnesses too?"

"Yes, if you have them to trade."

"And what do you have to offer English?"

"We have large stores of manufactured goods and some livestock. We are unfamiliar with your order and don't know if we have anything you may want."

"What kinds of livestock? Do you have draft horses?"

"I'm sorry, we only have saddle horses."

"A bull perhaps?"

"We have a young bull that hasn't been castrated, yet."

“What breed?”

“Hereford.”

“A boar?”

“Several we haven’t castrated yet.”

“What breed?”

“A cross between Hampshire and a Poland China.”

“Do you have a proven bull and boar?”

“Do you mean older animals that have sired calves and pigs?”

“Yes. We will provide two buggies with harnesses for the bull and one wagon with harness for the boar.”

“Would you be offended if we used trucks to deliver them?”

“Our Ordnung do not apply to the English.”

“I take it that means no, you do not object.”

“You are correct English. How soon shall you need these things?”

“How soon will you be able to make them available?”

“Now if you want.”

“We will return tomorrow with the bull and boar.”

“Goodbye English.”

He turned and walked off. I guess he was done talking with us so we mounted up and returned to the trailer. We unsaddled and unbridled the horses, replacing the bridles with halters and got them into the trailer. Ninety minutes later, we were home.

“How did it go?”

“We traded our bull and boar for one wagon and two buggies plus the harnesses.”

“What are we going to use for breeding?”

“We’ll trade off a young boar and bull for a mature boar and bull with someone who needs fuel or something.”

“When are you delivering them?”

“Tomorrow, Beth.”

o

Since the Ordnung did not apply to us, we were well armed the next day when we made the delivery. We didn’t openly carry, lest we offend. We used a 2½ ton truck for the livestock and a semi and flatbed for the vehicles. The buggies and wagons were used but in excellent condition. Well, so were the bull and boar. One buggy was a two passenger and the other had seating for six. The wagon was a buckboard of simple construction meant to be drawn by horses or other large animals.

Pulling a buggy introduced a new equation. Our horses had to be trained to harness. We had to learn just how far we could count on traveling with a buggy (20 miles). Empty, a single horse could pull the wagon, but the harness was for two horses and apparently intended for larger horses. The Amish man, Jacob, told us they had more harness if we needed it.

“Does anyone know how to train a horse to harness?”

“Nobody? Any ideas?”

“That farmer we traded grain with has draft horses so he should know.”

“Hello, I’m David Morgan from up the road. We traded with you for grain.”

“Is there something I can do for you?”

“Maybe. We traded the Amish up at Seymour some livestock for two buggies and a buckboard wagon plus harnesses. None of us know how to train a horse to harness. One of our guys said you had draft horses and should know.”

“What kind of horses do you have?”

“Saddle horses.”

“No draft horses?”

“You mean like those big horses? I’m afraid not.”

“Have you looked over the harnesses?”

“Yes we have.”

“Was the wagon harness bigger than the buggy harness?”

“Yes, yes it was. Is that important?”

“If you put much of a load in the buckboard, you’ll need large horses to haul the load. The harvest is done, how about I come up and look?”

“That would be fine. What kind of draft horses do you have?”

“The breeds? I have Belgian and Percheron.”

“No Clydesdales?”

“I sold them all to Anheuser-Busch.”

“One more question. Would you be open to selling a pair of horses?”

“How would you pay?”

“Gold?”

“No Krugerrands!”

“American Gold Eagles.”

“That you about 3 miles north on the west side?”

“That’s us.”

“I’ll be up directly.”

Joe and I returned home. I got to wondering how long directly was. I guess directly is one hour.

“That wagon harness with the horse collars is for draft horses pulling a heavy load. This here buggy harness is for a single horse for the smaller buggy and two horses in tandem, one in front of the other, for the big buggy.”

“Can saddle horses be trained to pull the buggies?”

“Yep. Have to buy yourself some draft horses to pull that buckboard, if you intend to haul heavy loads.”

“Which would you recommend?”

The Seniors – Chapter 33

“Six of one half dozen of the other. Belgian and Percheron will pull about the same load. Probably Percheron, Belgians are more than you need.”

“Will you train our horses?”

“A hundred a head. You want buy the Percheron’s, two ounces of gold per, take it or leave it.”

“Is that a fair price?”

“You’re asking me? Well, yes it is, I figure gold is around \$1,500 per so that’s \$3,000 a head. They eat a fair amount of grain and you’ll be coming to me for that too. You’re going to watch me training those horses to harness and that’ll make it a onetime deal.”

The man was pretty quick. He had a nice farm too, considering the hilly country. The advantage to owning a section of ground in the area was that, although you had one square mile, it probably contained much more than 640 acres with all of the hills and dales. Our small ten acre parcel was one such dale. A dale is a broad lowland valley.

In the time before it snowed, some of our saddle horses were trained to harness. These particular horses hadn’t been broken to saddle yet and probably wouldn’t be. It took a third gold Eagle to buy enough grain to feed the 2 Percheron’s. They were huge, standing about 17 hands.

It started to snow the first week of October and we gathered the livestock into the barn and began our new ‘winter routine’. Snow was cleared twice a day, keeping a clear path among the trailers, house and outbuildings. The kerosene tanker and a diesel tanker were moved up to make fuel available for the heaters and to refill the diesel tank if the generators kicked in. None of the buildings or trailers was oriented to allow us to mount the solar panels on top of them and our solar array was at ground level. The snowfall soon buried the array and we were on generators.

Those logs hauled back from cutting the standing dead trees had all been cut to size, split and divided among the trailers. We took a rick to use in the fireplace. The coal room had been refilled and I was back to shoveling coal into the stoker. You know what a stoker is, right? A mechanical stoker is a device which feeds coal into the firebox of a boiler. It is standard equipment on large stationary boilers and was also fitted to large steam locomotives to ease the burden of the fireman. However it also refers to a device that feeds coal into a furnace.

Our stoker wasn’t part of the furnace as such; it was an attachment that feed the coal up though an auger through a cutout in the front of the furnace. I usually filled it in the morning and checked it before we retired for the night. On an especially cold day I might need to add more coal at night, 2 or 3 scoops.

The system obviously depended upon electricity to power the stoker and the controls. It was a forced air system which meant that it also needed electricity to power the fan. Absent power, the system still worked, the air rising past the fan via convection but the furnace required direct, manual fueling via the cast iron fire door. It had an automatic shaker grate, with a manual means to 'shake the grates', a ring on the outside that you pulled and pushed to move the cast iron grates. I doubt they still build furnaces like this anymore. The new ones are more about efficiency than usability.

We had a furnace like that one in our home in Springfield when I was growing up. Dad replaced it with a gas furnace when Springfield got natural gas, or slightly after. I was still in school, but don't remember which grade. You could get compressed natural gas for rural locations but most everyone preferred propane.

This second winter was shorter than the previous, but only by 4 weeks. We got $\frac{2}{3}$ the amount of snow as the previous year. We still held the twice weekly meetings and now that I was feeling better than before, didn't miss any. I was getting cabin fever and dug out a CD I'd purchased from Fleataxi and read all of the stories. Of all the stories it contained, I liked 'Paradise' the best. After I finished Fleataxi, TOM and Flight ER-Doc's Paradise, I went to my desktop where I had all of Jerry D Young's stories copied and stored. At least I think it was all of them. Very interesting, similar to TOM's yet distinctly different. The lessons were there, but far more subtle.

When it came to Jerry's and TOM's choices in firearms, there were again subtle differences. Jerry liked Steyr AUG and HK91s. Tom liked the M1As almost exclusively and of course the Barrett M82A1M and later the Tac-50 which Derek bought after TOM died. In his early stories, TOM was all about Remington 870s, but later it was all Mossberg 590A1s. And both of the authors had a place in their stories for single action revolvers and lever action carbines. Had I unknowingly been influenced by something I read? No, I think not, I liked the M14 in the Army and it followed that I purchased similar arms as a civilian. Who didn't grow up watching westerns on TV? I had my cowboy guns, too.

Opinions were divided, but Jerry was the better writer. Maybe I had been influenced by both, many of their favorites were in my collection. When John's was added in, the only firearm missing was the Steyr AUG. It was a bullpup design that used the 5.56x45mm NATO round.

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We were waiting for the ground to dry when one of those late model mega cab pickups pulled in. It had a sole passenger and he looked very familiar.

"Sarge?"

“It was a bitch finding you Bookman, all I knew was Branson. I lived in Bolivar and worked in Branson years back so I was familiar with the area and finally tracked you down.”

“Come in, take a load off.”

“Is Farmer around?”

“John died of cancer AB.”

“AB?”

“Ante Bellum.”

“And we’re living in?”

“Post Bellum, PB. What brings you up north looking for us?”

“The insurrection, what else?”

“We figured the insurrection ended when the war happened.”

“It could have. Unfortunately, it didn’t. Have you heard anything at all on the radio about the president?”

“Apparently Cheyenne Mountain survived the bombing although Colorado Springs and Denver didn’t.”

“That’s right. The Russians and Chinese, mostly Russians, targeted our population centers and a few military bases.”

“That’s what we figured out. Are you still in Jonesboro?”

“We ended up moving back to Flippin where my wife’s folks are. I take it that you don’t know what the president has the Army doing.”

“We haven’t seen hide or hair of the military. Any military for that matter.”

“It’s an interesting situation, to say the least. The military, excluding the Navy, essentially divided into two camps. The first supports the Constitution and the second supports the president. This latter group follows all orders, legal or not.”

“We heard that the Army was putting people in the FEMA camps but leaving the gates open. How does that square with what you just said?”

“The first group of military is operating the camps since there are only 6 of them.”

“Where do you stand?”

“My oath was to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic, not the president. I still stand where I stood before the war and am part of a group of guerillas operating behind ‘enemy lines’ as it were. There is no duration defined in the Oath; once taken, it is a lifetime affirmation.”

“So all of us that are veterans are still bound by our oath?”

“Actually, you are. However, given the ages of some of you, no one really expects you to fight.”

“Bull hockey. If the oath still applies and we can walk, we’re obligated. We still have all of the ordnance and weapons. When John died, he left his guns to my family and his estate to my grandchildren.”

“How are you fixed on .50 caliber ammo for my Tac-50?”

“We have some of just about every kind of ammo ever made for a .50 caliber machinegun and ammo made for the .50 caliber rifles. M1022, Mk211, Barrett M33, 750gr A-MAX, you name it. What do you need?”

“A can or two of the Mk211 and the same of the A-MAX.”

“John had elephant ammo.”

“What’s that?”

“Soft point ammo for the .50 caliber rifle.”

“Where did you get that?”

“John said he got it from Cabela’s.”

“How did you fare with the attack and the aftermath?”

“I was sick for a while after, maybe a year. Beth had to give me shots of B-12 for anemia.”

“Were you out in the radiation?”

“Someone had to care for the livestock. I had a good gas mask with a CBRN filter, Tyvek suit, boots and gloves. Despite that, I received a dose of about 150R in 40 days. Dave took over after that. But, I’m better now and able to do anything a person my age can do. Besides, I’m a good rifleman.”

“Are you going to join with us?”

“Someone pinch me, I must be dreaming; it’s a nightmare.”

“So you saw the Rambo movies?”

“Yeah, so what?”

“Trautman described Rambo to someone once as your worst nightmare. What’s going on in this country is your worst nightmare come true. This isn’t an insurrection anymore; it’s a civil war between the forces of the light and forces of the dark.”

“Which one are you?”

“I’d like to think I’m one of the good guys. What are you Bookman, good guy or not? Are you on our side and a member of the force of light? Or, are you on the other side and a member of the forces of dark?”

“I get a choice?”

“One time only.”

“How much ammo did you say you needed?”

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Strangely, it turned out that the forces of light included as many, if not more, Marines as soldiers. The Navy wasn’t involved. I learned that they had survived the war mostly intact and had stood off our shores, sending in boat crews to gather food for the sailors and Marines aboard the ships and boats. Sarge said they were the only neutral US forces. I was totally confused and asked what he had been smoking, ‘cause I sure wanted some. He handed me a Marlboro.

“Joe, I guess this means we’re going back to fighting again.”

“Darn, I was sort looking forward to curling up in front of my wood stove and watching time pass.”

“I suppose it’s optional. Sarge didn’t say everyone had to join in.”

“You get me killed and I’ll piss on your grave.”

The Seniors – Chapter 34

“Fine, I do the same for you. Say, I’ve never asked and you’ve never said, were you in the military?”

“I was at Khe Sanh.”

“A Marine?”

“I sure wasn’t Air Force, but they flew in supplies. It was awful and my enlistment was up shortly after I got back to the world, so I got out and never looked back. However, once a Marine...”

“Always a Marine. I’ve been reminded.”

“Oh?”

“Beth was commenting on John.”

“I knew John, sort of. He was at Khe Sanh too and I only knew him in passing because he was in another Company. It was a real shame about his getting cancer.”

“At least he didn’t live to see the world destroy itself.”

“So, are you and I going to team up as a sniping team?”

“Have you ever fired a .50 caliber rifle?”

“M16 during Nam and 7.62x51mm as a civilian. You have John’s AW50 and your own Barrett don’t you?”

“We have two, a model 95 and a model M82A1M. Dave can take the Barrett and you and I will use the AW50. We’re going to need to find some place we can shoot further than 1,000’, we should train out to a minimum of 1,500 meters. Whichever of us is the better shooter will be the sniper and the other the observer.”

“Do we have time for that?”

“We’ll have to make time. I’ve shot the Barrett but not the AW50.”

“How are you fixed on .50 caliber ammo?”

“I’m planning on giving Sarge 600 rounds and that’s a small portion of what we have.”

“You said something about bayonet lugs for the M1As.”

“Give your rifle to David and he’ll add one. What firearms do you plan on taking?”

“All of them. Well, I guess I mean a .45 pistol, Mossberg shotgun and an M1A or HK 91. That will allow me to pick and choose according to the situation we face. How about you?”

“The same, except it will be my Super Match and I might take John’s USP Tactical with the suppressor.”

“You have a Kimber don’t you?”

“Yes, but no suppressor for that pistol.”

“Is Sarge still here or did he take off?”

“He’s gone but I have his cell phone number. Crap, that won’t work, the phones are down. He left a radio frequency with David for us to use. We’ll have to drive my pickup because it has a full set of radios.”

“What radios?”

“Citizens Band 40 channel SSB. Yaesu FT-857 all band mobile. We have some FRS/GMRS radios too and they’re licensed. There are some portable CBs if they’re not in use.”

“I don’t believe that matters anymore. Are all your radios the same?”

“Yes, the 857s. The antenna is at least as important as the radio and we have both vertical and beam antennas or didn’t you notice?”

“I noticed. Quite the setup, a rotor and everything. Nice tower, collapsible?”

“Yep.”

“You really went all out; it must have set you back a bundle.”

“You’re probably right Joe, but it was spaced out over several years so there were few large bites at any given time. Those orders from Walton were expensive; once we ordered eight deluxe units at one time. We even took out a loan once to buy ammo using our gold coins as security. Dave bought some hot .50 caliber for \$1 a round.”

“Hot as in powerful or hot as in stolen?”

“A buck a round? What do you think?”

“I guess that was a dumb question, .50 caliber rifle ammo goes for \$4 a round.”

“Or, higher. Our big assortment of unusual cartridges came from John who bought them from Cabela’s.”

“Unusual how?”

“It included 750gr HP, 750gr A-MAX and 650gr SP plus several cases of Barrett M-33. Dave got us M1022 and Mk211.”

“No API?”

“Now, that we could get from Sarge. We don’t need it; we have the Raufoss, HEIAP.”

“And if the target is wearing body armor...”

“They’ll get heartburn, literally.”

“What’s your effective range with your Super Match?”

“Ninety nine percent out to 800 meters, about ninety five percent at 1,000 meters.”

“Those are normal standard deviations. One at 800 meters, two at 1,000 meters and probably three at 1,200 meters; that’s 68%. That assumes a normal distribution. What kind of scope is on the rifle?”

“Leupold.”

“How do you calculate range?”

“Laser range finder.”

“What kind of scope is on the model 95?”

“Leupold with BORS.”

“Let’s use that, it has a built in range finder.”

“Sure, less stuff to haul around plus it’s suppressed.”

◦

Joe and I spent every free moment, e.g., all of our time firing the .50 caliber model 95 and brief amounts of time refreshing and/or refining our skills with the .308s, shotguns and .45s. When we thought we were ready, David put out a call to Sarge. He replied two days later and said he’d come by.

“What did you manage to come up with?”

“Three sniping teams with .50 caliber rifles. The first team will be Joe and me alternating between shooter and observer; the second team will be Chuck and Rob, also alternating; and, the third team will be Dave and his son David with Dave shooting and his son observing. We can provide two extra guards for each team; they’re young, but competent.”

“How many do you have on this acreage?”

“Seventeen.”

“And all but five are participating? How many women does that include?”

“One.”

“No offense, but it’s really primitive. We could supply one individual to fill in for her.”

“She has her mind made up and that’s not going to fly. She’s pure Tomboy anyway. So, it’s going to be us twelve or nothing.”

“How old is she?”

“Seventeen.”

“Is she any good?”

“I wouldn’t want to be in front of her rifle.”

“What’s she using?”

“What else, a M1A with red dot sights mounted using A.R.M.S. mounts. They mounted to allow her to either use her iron sights or the red dot.”

“Well, ok; but you will be responsible for her and if there’s a problem, she’s out. Next question, what are you taking for weapons?”

“Each person will have a .45 pistol, a Mossberg 12 gauge shotgun, a M1A plus one .50 caliber rifle per team. We’ll have smoke, concussion, fragmentation, LAW rockets, and demolition kits. Plus each person will have one of those new bayonets which will work on the shotgun or rifle. We’re going to use ALICE gear and those folding shovels plus lightweight tents and sleeping bags. We’ll bring our own food and water supplies and Katadyn water filters. There will be one advanced first aid kit per team, two canteens per person with cup and stove. We have ACS sponges for everyone to carry with them, Mark I kits and gas masks. There will be one team per pickup. If you prefer, we can use horses instead.”

“Are you going to have a name for your group?”

“If it’s okay, we’re picking up the Ghost Rider name. Apparently our exploits last time created a following.”

“Well ok, your first operation will be in Fayetteville, do you know the city?”

“Yep. Did an operation down there.”

“There are no friendlies in Fayetteville. Good luck. Call when you’ve finished the operation.”

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Fayetteville was a ghost town compared to the last time we’d been there. From a population of around 80,000, I’d be amazed if the population was 20,000. Those forces of dark had taken over the community. As we observed, people were being executed on a daily basis for sometimes small infractions of the ‘rules’. The people outnumbered the soldiers about 19:1 but we never saw a single resident with a firearm. We set up north, east and south and began our sniping.

We had identified those in charge of the soldiers and began to take the head off the snake. The one person we couldn’t get a shot at was the man at the top; he never came out of the building he was staying in. The silencers were working and because we changed locations daily, the non-suppressed M82A1M was in a different location every day. To cover all 4 points of the compass, we’d have needed 4 teams; having only three left one cardinal uncovered and it varied daily. A compass has 32 named points, including 4 cardinals and 28 ordinals.

Squads were sent out to look for us to no avail. One evening, Dave said he was going to make a suppressor for the Barrett M82, regardless, when we got back home. After four full weeks of action on our part, we awoke one morning to discover the soldiers gone, slunk off during the dark of night. We headed home and along the way notified Sarge that Fayetteville was back in the hands of the population. He said he needed a few days to select a new target community and we should rest up at home for now. David dismantled the Reflex suppressor and reproduced three identical copies.

“Why three?”

“I’m assuming we’ll get more .50 caliber rifles and I wanted spares.”

“That’s nice, but we can’t field another team of four.”

“Instead of three teams of four, how about four teams of three?”

The Seniors – Chapter 35

“I don’t like that Dave. Maybe we could recruit four more people from Springfield. I’ll ask Joe about contacting any of his old group who is still around.”

“The hardest part of that will be recruiting anyone in the aftermath. Assuming some of them survived, they’ll be busy tending to their families.”

“We could move them down here. There is no one occupying John’s place and he had a large garden space.”

“Joe are any of the former members of the Springfield Hornets still around?”

“There should be several, why?”

“Why several?”

“They were preppers and some belonged to a MAG with a well-stocked shelter.”

“Do you think you can get in touch with them?”

“I don’t think I can, I know I can because I’m in touch with them now.”

“John sold off his home place but the new owner never took occupancy. It just sitting there unoccupied and has a good sized garden. Dave and I were visiting about the number of teams we have and we could use four more people to form a fourth team. He dismantled that Reflex suppressor and made 3 identical copies. He told me that he hoped that we could find another .50 caliber rifle.”

“There’s one in the group, a Tac-50. Plus two other guys have M24 SWS rifles in .338 Lapua. We had our share of long range marksmen.”

“How many more could join our team?”

“My best guess would be two teams of 4, but only one with a .50 caliber. We need to find another .50 caliber rifle, any ideas?”

“In the aftermath of the AWB and WW III; I wouldn’t know where to look.”

“I just might. Say could David produce more of those ballistic knives?”

“He made extra blades for ours, so I’m sure he can.”

“Ask him to make eight with extra blades. They’ve been illegal for so long, many people don’t recognize them for what they are. They just might give our people an edge, no pun intended, in a face to face confrontation.”

“David, we’re going to need 8 ballistic knives with extra blades plus two suppressors in .338 Lapua.”

“You haven’t heard from Sarge?”

“Not yet. Joe says some of the Springfield Hornets were members of a MAG and he’s maintained contact with them. They have one .50 caliber rifle and two in .338 Lapua. I suggested moving them to John’s place.

“You knew that John had a generator and a 40,000 gallon diesel tank didn’t you?”

“No I didn’t. What about it?”

“All of his piping had heat tapes so I doubt there are any busted pipes. I’ve been going over there periodically and changing the oil in the generator. The place seemed fine to me.”

“Why would you do that, John died.”

“It just seemed like the thing to do at the time. Maybe out of respect for John, hell I don’t know.”

“How big is the generator?”

“It’s much smaller than ours, 15kw. However, we have that Cummins 3 phase DGCG that we use for the gas stations and could install it.”

“I’ll arrange that, you get your machines working on the things for Joe’s group.”

“I came up with another .50 caliber rifle.”

“What brand Joe?”

“It’s a Zastava M93 Black Arrow and can be had in either the .50BMG or the 12.7x108mm Soviet cartridges. Made in Serbia, based on the Mauser action and has a 5 round magazine. The one I found has 6 magazines and cost 6 ounces of gold.”

“Bolt action? Dave can fit a suppressor.”

“I was counting on that. Each of our five teams will have one .50 caliber rifle, suppressed. I wish we had more of the .338 Lapua’s but I couldn’t locate more. Besides, we’re limited to the ammo those two guys have available.”

"I told Dave to make 2 .338 suppressors and 8 of the knives with extra blades. He told me that John had a 40,000 gallon diesel tank feeding a 15kw generator. He's been going over there changing the oil and filter. About all the generator is powering is some heat tapes to keep the pipes from busting. We can move the big Cummins 3 phase over there and I'm going to need some help."

"They already have suppressors, they came with them. Chuck and Rob, you and me?"

"Yeah, it weighs about ½ ton."

Our lone female was replaced by the 18 year old son from the group living on John's farm. While she didn't accuse us of gender discrimination, it was obvious she felt that way. In an effort to placate her, Joe and I had decided to place her in charge of security for both locations: our acreage and John's farm. Additionally, although the land no longer belonged to John, it was unused and planted into grain crops and hay using John's old equipment. We still got Timothy from the guy down the road for the Percheron's.

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"Are you guys all rested up?"

"Sarge?"

"Yeah, are you ready to go?"

"We've expanded our group to five teams of four and each team now has a silenced .50 caliber rifle. Joe's group included a MAG and they moved down from rural Springfield to John's farm. What's our next assignment?"

"You may not like it. The target is Jefferson City, Missouri."

"Who is in Jefferson City?"

"Remnants of the group from Fayetteville."

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely. They're set up in the Capitol."

"All of them? That was a large group."

"No, not all of them, they split into two groups, but that leader you never saw is using the Missouri Governor's office as his headquarters."

"Winter will be coming on soon. It's going to be awful up in Jefferson City."

“I realize that Dave, it can’t be helped. Those people need our help now.”

“Are we really making a difference? It seems like there are so many of them that 20 people won’t be able to do much.”

“When you had 12, you managed to drive them out of Fayetteville. You are making a difference and perhaps this time you’ll get their commander.”

“Do you know who he is?”

“Not he, she. I haven’t gotten her name yet, but she was an Army Lt. Colonel. Hard as nails and word has it she uses sexual favors to keep her immediate subordinates under her control.”

“Sleeping with them?”

“No, sleeping with some NCO’s who ride roughshod on her officers. One guy said she swings both ways, but I haven’t been able to substantiate that. You watch your back; she has the morals of an alley cat and ice water runs in her veins.”

It sure wasn’t the fifties. During the last half of the 20th century, morality went into the toilet. We learned the names of new diseases like AIDS, HIV and Ebola. We learned that some boys liked boys and some girls like girls; and there was another group, some boys, some girls, who liked both. And then, there were the sexual predators. Plus, as much as it may seem out of place here, the violence, so much violence.

We hadn’t experienced violence down here on the acreage. There was more in Little Rock although it hadn’t really affected Dave and Geena or their kids. Around the country, the violence was mostly gang related and found in the larger cities. Those same cities had been the targets during the war. Did the bombs kill the gangsters or the civilians? Until we could get to some of those cities or near them we wouldn’t know.

There was only one gun missing from my collection that I really wanted. You know the one – you insert the magazine and don’t chamber a round. Then, the gun automatically chambers a round and starts firing with no one’s finger on the trigger. I first heard about those from the Brady campaign. The guns even had a name, ‘Evil’ guns. They could be revolvers but most often were ‘automatics’. Not semi-automatics, but automatics. There were a few full auto pistols manufactured but not many and they were most definitely military firearms.

Alas, I knew it would be an unfulfilled dream because even machine pistols need someone to chamber a round and pull the trigger. The bad actor wasn’t the firearm, it was the shooter. No matter the caliber, whether it is .17 rimfire or an elephant gun the bad character was the shooter.

You knew who got to tell the teams that the primary target was female. What is there in the attitude of American men that creates a reluctance to shoot a woman? Nobody refused outright; however the looks on their faces spoke volumes. I repeated Sarge's warning, "You watch your back; she has the morals of an alley cat and ice water runs in her veins." Was she a flat chested dyke or a pile of curves with long blonde hair and baby blue eyes? Sarge hadn't described her, leaving me and the others guessing. A military officer would have moderately short hair, but that had been long enough for her to grow it out.

I could mentally compare her to a snake because some of the most beautifully colored snakes are the deadliest. Each team took a vehicle, a mega cab pickup, with about the same equipment as last time. The Missouri runs past Jefferson City on the northeast side. The Capitol is in a circle, Called Capitol Avenue, near the river. While reason would dictate arranging ourselves around the Capitol in 72° increments, with the river to cut them off, we could go with 270° divided 5 ways or about 54° each. We could pin them down rather than moving daily and pour fire into them until they gave up.

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However, before we left, we had to make sure that our wives and families would be ok while we were gone. That meant refilling all of the fuel tanks, hauling firewood and coal, bringing up the tanker of Jet A and another of diesel. Extra ammo and ordnance was pulled from the bunker, just in case. When we were ready, we left spaced out about one vehicle every 10 minutes.

Despite having the ordnance, we hadn't found a need to use it and still had almost all of the stuff we had started with, excluding ammo. We were conservative with ammo too, since it was a manufactured item and none of our group reloaded. We kept the boxer primed cases in pails for when we could find someone who reloaded. We could reload the shotgun shells with a Lee Reloader, a device that was designed for idiots. It dated back to 1960 and was their initial model which my father had purchased to reload his shotgun shells. We had molds for slugs and 00 buck and had collected wheel weights when we could. They were too hard so we'd have to add some more lead or something.

We assembled southwest of Jefferson City, near Brazito where we dug out the thermoses of hot coffee and ham sandwiches. We studied maps as we ate making sure where the locations were in Jefferson City. We agreed to drive on to the outskirts of Jefferson City, this time in a convoy. A convoy had advantages, strength in numbers, and disadvantages, an increased chance of being spotted. That's where luck comes into play, either you have it or not. Ours held on this day. When we arrived, we spread out to observe and agreed to meet and set up camp at the Oak Hills Golf Center around 4pm.

After arriving and parking our vehicles in hopefully unobtrusively a manner as possible, we moved up to observe. Joe and I ended up right in front of the Capitol and observed with the spotting scope and the scope off of the .50 caliber rifle. Some of the group was women, just as it had been in Fayetteville. One of those women could very well be the

commander but she wasn't wearing a sign or name tag saying 'commander', if indeed we actually saw her.

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How would she be different? One thought we had would be that the soldiers would defer to her. Three hours later, we pulled up stakes and headed to the golf center, none the wiser who the commander might be. We camped out in the area of trees. We set up our Coleman stove and began working on a hot meal. Later, while we ate, we shared observations, which was akin to a military debriefing. My son Dave and grandson Dave noted one woman in particular that stood out. Not so much because there was anything outstanding about her, but because she traveled in an entourage of NCO's.

"Sarge said that the Lt. Colonel got her power not from her officers but her NCO's. If you get a chance take her out. You should use Mk211 in case she's wearing body armor."

"Ok, but I'm still not comfortable with shooting a woman."

"If she is the commander, do you believe she'd have any compulsion from ordering her people to hold off killing you?"

"No, I suppose not."

"And, if she's not the commander, do you believe she wouldn't kill you if the commander ordered her to?"

"Again, no."

"Then, make your shot count. You never know, we might get lucky. If we take out their commander there will be competition to fill her position. It should leave them disorganized and maybe unable to make a concerted effort to track us down."

From that point on, all members of the forces of dark became targets; after all we wouldn't want to be accused of gender discrimination, we had enough problems. It proved to be like shooting fish in a barrel in the beginning. We screwed up big time by confining our shooting to daylight hours. During the nighttime hours, they sent out groups to search for us. When they came close enough to the golf center to cause concern, we modified our tactics.

"How many night vision scopes do we have?"

"The MAG has two, both Raptor 6X."

"Range?"

"Typical operating range is 2425 yards in moonlight / 1695 yards in starlight / 840 yards in cloud cover."

"Are they sighted in?"

“Not for the .50 caliber rifles; we can go do that now and go back on duty.”

“Are there any objections to having 3 teams during the day and 2 at night?”

“No one?”

“Can you stay awake until we relieve you?”

“We’ll need lots of strong coffee.”

“Eat first, use the john and sight in those scopes. We’ll brew up the coffee for you.”

Apparently the forces of dark felt they were safe moving around in the dark based on previous experience. The two teams accounted for 12 kills, half of them thought to be female. Our five teams kept them fairly well pinned down, just like we’d planned. The utility tunnels in and around the Capitol allowed them to move around unobserved. Not every shot was fatal and that didn’t matter at first. They’d tie up 3-4 people attending to the wounded and presenting more targets. When we began to work over those helping, the wounded were left to die unless they were able to get to cover on their own.

We spent 3 months in Jefferson City. Food was beginning to get short; we were cold, tired and wet. We hadn’t had a clear shot in over a week. We called it quits and headed home. Bucking the snow filled roads was a challenge on its own. It took two days to travel from Jefferson City to Branson. We called in and told them we were headed home; not realizing it would take another day.

“Where are you?”

“Beth? We’re halfway there, the roads are awful.”

“We were planning a big dinner.”

“Can you hold it? If not, we’ll eat leftovers.”

“We’ll figure out something, be careful. There’s a new bunch in Branson.”

“Trouble?”

“No so far.”

“Security at the acreage and farm ok?”

“You a created monster; we’re fine, frustrated but fine.”

Jo, Joanne, was a real go getter and had taken to the security job with a vengeance. We didn't know that she insisted that everyone above the age of 10 be armed with a handgun and a long arm all of the time. There wouldn't be any defenseless women and children on her watch. Of course almost everyone age ten and up had already been schooled in gun safety and taught to shoot handguns, rifles and often shoguns. That was just the way things were PB. Lessons started with safe handling of a particular firearm, advanced to the mechanics of the firearm and finished with learning to shoot same. Each step was mastered before moving to the next.

In general, our method of raising our children was sure and swift; we followed an old rule, 'sparing the rod will spoil the child'. Praise was given when praise was due. Maturity of thought won the highest praise. We weren't teaching them to grow up too fast, we hoped; the world was cold and cruel, PB.

"Sarge, come back."

"Are you home?"

"Roger, we wrapped it up and came back. We got in about an hour ago. Can you come by in a few days?"

"Copy, I need ammo."

"We need night vision for 3 .50 caliber rifles."

"I'll see what I can do. Sarge clear."

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When Sarge showed up three weeks later, he had 3 Raptor 6X scopes. Although ITT claimed the scopes were military and LEO only, Sarge claimed he knew of no military designation and considering the price, cops probably couldn't afford them. He wasn't looking for Mk211, but match grade ball ammo for his Tac-50. We traded him 4,000 rounds of A-MAX for the 3 scopes.

"You realize that you got her, don't you?"

"We killed a fair share of women up in Jefferson City. Only in the beginning did one or two of the teams identify anyone they thought might have been her. When they discovered we were only working daylight hours, they came at night looking for us. We changed the plan and had two teams sniping at night."

"I heard. That's when you got her, the first night you began night operations."

"I guess that explains why it petered out. In fact, that's why we pulled out. How many groups are there around the country fighting?"

“There are forces of light and dark in every state in the lower 48. Several states had passed legislation back in 2009 and 2010 similar to the New Hampshire Resolution. Some even discussed seceding. Most saw it as drawing a line in the sand about the feds abuse of power. The claim was since they had asked to join the Union, they could withdraw their request.”

“But no one actually seceded?”

“It would have meant a second Civil War, something that no one wanted.”

“Tell me what we’re doing now isn’t a Civil War.”

“I sure wish I could, but I can’t. It’s not the North and South; it is freedom versus repression. As strange as it may sound, out in the People’s Republik, homespun patriots have taken control of the state. America turned into a great divide, liberals and conservatives. The conservatives were God fearing Christians who believed in earning what you had. The liberals felt that we owed it to everyone to undo every wrong ever committed during the history of the US.”

“You sound like a teacher.”

“I majored in History. The Great Emancipator only freed the slaves in the south. The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution officially abolished and continues to prohibit slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime. It was adopted on December 6, 1865, and was then declared in a proclamation of Secretary of State William H. Seward on December 18.”

“Do we get to rest up or do you have another operation?”

“Not until you have your crops planted. I heard there’s a new group in Branson. Maybe you’d better check them out. You’re known in the area and it wouldn’t be particularly unusual for you to drive into town.”

“It almost would. We’d stop for gas or diesel and do a little grocery shopping. We mostly went to Springfield.”

“I cleaned bank buildings in Branson years ago.”

“How did your father die?”

“Sitting in front of his computer working on some story, surrounded with the things he valued. Apparent heart attack, they said. I think he died of disappointment about the way he saw the country headed.”

“Let me see that Sauer.”

“This one?”

It was just as described in his stories. Most of the original bluing intact. Low serial number with all of the markings that distinguished the original production. Sarge pointed them all out. .32 auto FMJ only, hollow points jammed. Sarge said he'd never tried Gold Dot but from the looks of the pictures of the .32 cartridge, it wouldn't work.

I asked what he intended to do with 4,000 rounds of .50 caliber ammo. He said he'd share it. When I asked about reloading, he asked if our brass was sorted.

“It's sorted according to caliber and primer type.”

“I'll take it all. I'll get the boxer primed reloaded and back to you. We'll keep the Berdan primed for our own use, is that ok?”

“Match grade reload?”

“Sure thing. We have a hydraulic deprimer for the Berdan. The brass is only good for 3-4 reloading's because of the built in anvil.”

“Which bullets?”

“Sierra 168 or 165 for the .308. Gold Dot hollow point for the 9mm and .45ACP. SS109 for the .223. Lead for the cowboy guns. Do you roll your own for the shotguns?”

“We can; however we don't use them much.”

“We can get more shotgun ammo. Remington low recoil buckshot and Brenneke slugs. Need any?”

“You can never have too much ammo.”

“Give me your empty shells and we'll use them for reloading. I'll figure out a fair trade for the empty versus loaded shells. I'm leaving in the morning. This is a list of the frequencies used by patriot radio. This book like affair contains the codes the individual groups use. Most everyone has developed a set of code words for brevity and security. You'll find the list for our group under the heading 'Ghost Riders'. While your group is using Ghost Riders, my group is too. It makes us seem much larger than we are.”

“Gonna create a legend before this ends Sarge.”

The Seniors – Chapter 37

“I don’t want to be a legend or a hero. I just want to go back home to my family.”

Maybe not, but his rank insignia was now Master Sergeant and I half suspected that before this ended it would be CSM or higher; either Warrant Officer or Commissioned Officer. Sneaky SOB too, two groups of Ghost Riders operating in different states, Arkansas and Missouri, and to an extent indistinguishable.

“It’s nice to be home.”

“Are you going out again?”

“We are, sometime after the crops are in. Did the food hold out through the winter so far?”

“We took some up to Branson to trade for things we needed.”

“Any trouble?”

“Not with Jo providing security, Rob trained her well. She can pull a six gun, fire six shots and have it holstered before the other guy clears leather. Like the man with no name or Trinity. Plus she has a P-14 in a shoulder holster. She prefers a coach gun for her long arm but has a HK91 slung across her back. I don’t know how she does it, she can’t weight 110 pounds.”

“I’ll bet every ounce is muscle.”

“You’d change your mind if you looked at her curves. Hips made for having babies and they sure won’t starve.”

“Lungs big enough to swim halfway to Catalina under water?”

“I’d say so, she’s maturing.”

“Does she have a boyfriend?”

“Are you volunteering?”

“No, just curious.”

“Chuck’s son.”

“That’s quite the combination; he’s 6’ and she’s how tall?”

“Five six.”

“Not as bad as I thought. Add 2½” heels and they’d make a nice looking couple.”

“They do.”

“What about that nice dinner you talked about last night?”

“It was in the oven so I’m making turkey pot pie, casserole style.”

“There are extra cartons of Kool’s in the basement, Jo picked them up.”

“100’s?”

“No, filter tipped kings. She also got you a few boxes of Marsh Wheeling stogies.”

“No kidding. Let me get a shower and put on my western clothes.”

As best I can recall, I first saw Marsh Wheeling cigars on the TV show Maverick. They a slender (34 ring) 7” cigar with a tip you bite off. They weren’t Havana’s, but not that bad. They had been manufactured at a plant in Ohio, I think. Jo had even gotten me a humidifier. One box was in the humidifier and the remaining boxes in an ammo can with a damp sponge. With the boxes wrapped in cellophane, I doubt the sponge did much good.

“Black Bart?”

“Cheyenne Brodie.”

“You’re no 6’ 6.”

“He probably isn’t either these days, if he’s still alive.”

“How old would he be?”

“Around 90. Bart Maverick (Jack Kelly) is dead, but Bret Maverick (James Gardener) is still around the last that I heard.”

“Most of the movie stars we watched growing up are dead, you know.”

“Have you looked in a mirror, we’re not far behind them.”

“A couple more missions and I will definitely quit. Sleeping in a mummy bag on a layer of Insulite might be ok, but it’s not like sleeping in your own bed.”

After we ate, I dug out a bottle of Maker’s Mark and broke the seal. A knock came at the door and it was Joe and Mary.

“Well, look at you.”

“Care for a finger or two of Maker’s Mark?”

“I could handle that, got another one of those cigars?”

“Here you go. Jo picked them up somewhere, Branson I think.”

“Yeah, Chuck and she set a date, early May.”

“They’ll need a trailer.”

“That’s covered. She found one and we’ll have to tow it down and install it before the wedding. I’m sure it will need furniture too, so maybe a trip to Springfield is in order.”

“We have extra 1,100 gallon propane tanks, but no more generators.”

“Jo found a 30kw diesel in Springfield. They’re going up after it tomorrow. She also brought back a wood heater to install in the trailer. She’s a real go getter.”

“Any problem towing the trailer down here now?”

“Can you get all the lines in?”

“No problem, the ground isn’t frozen as deeply this year.”

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The trailer was a demonstrator with the wheels and tongue still attached. Chuck and Jo went with us and we stopped by a furniture store to stock it. They carried major appliances and they picked out a 24.7ft³ Whirlpool freezer. A trip to Tractor Supply was unnecessary, we had the wood stove. It took 3 days to set up including leveling and hooking everything up. As with the other trailers all piping was heat taped and over covered with insulated tubing. Their Kohler 30REOZJB burned from 1.0gph to 2.8gph and produced 125 amps.

They moved the wedding date up from May to Valentine’s Day. Jo had arranged for a Minister from Branson and the wedding took place in our house, followed with a reception. The Minister gladly took food in exchange for his services. We omitted the shivaree, a North American term for a clamorous salutation made to a newlywed couple by an assembled crowd of neighbors and friends. The shivaree was often conducted in the middle of the night with the party of friends and neighbors sneaking up on the couple’s home, perhaps in hopes of catching them in a "compromising position". They would bring pots and pans to bang on or other noise makers, and sometimes a few men would stealthfully climb up on the roof, to all start making as much noise as possible on the

designated signal. This would of course wake up the couple and cause them to come outside, hopefully without loaded shotguns, to see what was going on. The assembled party would then wish them a blissful marriage, and the couple would of course be obligated to serve snacks and liquid refreshments to the gathered throng.

The newly married couple slept in the following morning. The rest of us cleaned guns and made out new menus for our next outing. But we mostly spent time with family. Beth and Geena started a pot of stew for dinner, feeding us ham and eggs with hash browns and toast for breakfast. Lunch was tuna sandwiches with homemade potato chips, slightly thicker than normal chips but good nonetheless. We rested, spent time sighting in new scopes, arranging and rearranging our kit until we could leave at any time.

We also worked with those ballistic knives until their use became second nature. We put a fine edge on our bayonets, the OKC-3S. LTS foods were examined to provide better meals for when we went out on the next mission. Our first aid kits were added to, mostly ACS sponges and tape. A set of pots and pans to be carried in one of the pickups plus flatware and more blue enamel plates and cups were also included. We spent nearly a month hand shelling the corn and sorting the seed from last year's crop.

Finally the ground dried and we planted gardens at both locations and field crops on John's farm. We were actually close to having enough horses so everyone could ride. With our freezers nearly full we left for the next mission.

This mission was the home of Judge Isaac Parker, Fort Smith, and would be the first Joint Operation with the Arkansas Ghost Riders. Fort Smith is surrounded on 3 sides by the Arkansas River and Sarge advised us to meet up at Fort Chaffee. We would have a chance to resupply from the Arkansas National Guard stores. Assuming there wouldn't be much, if anything, available, we didn't modify what we intended to take. Fortunately, the beds of the pickups weren't full.

We gained M118LR, M855A1, M993 and M995 cartridges, M67 hand grenades and M136 AT-4 rockets. While there was nothing wrong with our LAW rockets, the AT-4s were larger, 84mm. The maximum effective range of the AT-4 was 1.5 times the range of the LAW, 300 meters v. 200 meters.

"We'll be targeting buildings this time out so take all the AT-4s you can find room for. We've reconnoitered Fort Smith and they've gotten themselves cornered within the banks of the Arkansas."

"That's stupid; why would they do that?"

"Over confidence? Poor leadership? It could be anything and we have no idea of who is in charge of this group. I might have been wrong; maybe you didn't get the Ice Queen up in Jefferson City after all. Did you check out Branson?"

“We went through town and asked around. The new group appears to be survivors from Springfield.”

“Appears to be?”

“I told you that Beth and I didn’t shop in Branson often. The gas station was out of fuel and locked up. The grocery stores were out of food and locked up too.”

“We have 20 teams and you have 5. Each team is organized the same way yours are, one sniper, one observer and two guards. Plus each team has one .50 caliber rifle with a good daylight scope and a Raptor 6X. We have 8 people who have rifles chambered in the .338 Lapua and you have 2. We’ve discussed creating additional sniper teams based on those rifles. What rifles do your guys have?”

“Remington M24A3 SWS.”

“No Accuracy International?”

“No.”

“The ones my group has are also the Remington.”

“Suppressors?”

“Standard on the A3, optional on the A2. LEO and military only; how did your guys get two?”

“I don’t know quite honestly.”

The range of the .338 Lapua was nearly equal to the .50BMG. It was accurate out to about 1,750 meters, which in the case of Fort Smith, was more than adequate. So, instead of 25 teams, all armed with .50 caliber rifles, we had 35 teams, 10 armed with Remington M24A3 SWS in .338 Lapua.

“So, Joe, we set up here and move forward when we have a chance?”

“That’s what Sarge said. I don’t like moving up from the previous position in a forward direction, it makes it easier for the forces of dark to spot us.”

“We’ll be okay. Any forces of dark in front of us should be dead.”

The Seniors – Chapter 38

We set up 1,500 meters from a defensive line the other guys formed. We took out three targets and word came over the radio to move up. I picked up the M-95 and started to move forward. Something slammed into me and the lights went out.

My eyes felt like they were glued shut. My mouth was dry enough I felt like I could drink a gallon of water. I felt someone washing my eyes, with a gauze pad?

“What...where...how did I get home?”

“You were transported to a hospital in Fort Smith and operated on. From there, you were transported by air to Cox Medical Centers South in a UH-60. You were released and came home 10 days ago.”

“What happened?”

“The other side had snipers too.”

“We had completed our first round of fire and the order came to move up. I got up with the M-95 and started to move out when something slammed into me and I woke up here.”

“You were lucky that the Ghost Riders had a Blackhawk on call. Joe was with you and stayed with you all the way.”

“Was he shot too?”

“No he wasn’t. He was the only witness and Sarge wanted him to stay with you. It turns out that you are both blood type O Negative, eliminating transfusion problems.”

“How much blood did I need?”

“One liter, taken at two different times. The first was in Fort Smith and the second was in Springfield. Joe was the donor both times and has been resting since to rebuild his blood supply.”

“Help me up.”

“Maybe in a few days.”

“How about right damn now?”

“There’s urine bottle by the bed, use that. In case you haven’t noticed, you’re on an IV.”

“What’s in it?”

“30% Dextrose in Water. You had a line in your other arm for the blood transfusions.”

“Why am I home?”

“They needed the space. That’s the only operating hospital in Springfield.”

“Am I going to be ok?”

“I was told that if you came out of the coma, and retained cognitive functions, you would be okay. However, your hunting days are over.”

“I told you I was going to quit after two more trips. I guess I’m quitting one trip short of my goal. Where was I hit?”

“In the back.”

“But, we were moving forward.”

“Bent over so you couldn’t be sighted, I know. The bullet slid under the body armor’s ESAPI plate, hit a rib in your back and glanced inward. Joe got the shooter, but it was already too late. He radioed for help and four of the others came and pulled you out. Sarge got you to a south side hospital where they opened you up and removed the bullet. Your insides were torn up badly and they kept you in ICU until Sarge was able to arrange the Blackhawk to transport Joe and you to Springfield.”

“How long have I been...”

“This is the 44th day.”

“I was out 6 weeks?”

“Six weeks, one and one half days into the seventh.”

“I remember something slamming into me and waking up here.”

“The doctor said that might happen. Lacunar amnesia is the loss of memory about one specific event. It is a type of amnesia that leaves a lacuna, a gap, in the record of memory.”

“I’m hungry.”

“I have some broth. I’ll get you some and if you keep it down, I’ll pull the IV.”

“It looks like it’s infiltrated.”

“It is, I think you might have brittle veins, I’ve had to move it several times.”

“I thought that brittle veins led to extravasation.”

“At our age, either is possible. The doctor said I might have to move the IV about every four days.”

“When can I get out of bed?”

“Ask me tomorrow.”

I ate the broth and it was a little salty; probably because I hadn’t ingested anything in over 6 weeks. Beth pulled my IV and when she left, I went to the bathroom. I was awfully shaky and had to hold onto furniture just to get there and back. No sooner was I back in bed then Beth opened the door and let Joe in.

“You look like crap, Joe. Thanks for the oil change.”

“I thought you were going to sleep your life away.”

“Beth said that you got the guy who shot me and got help to get me to the hospital.”

“After all these years, you still wear your dog tags. Sarge got your blood type off those and asked if anyone had O negative. I did and since my partner was all shot up, he sent me with you. I left the .50 so they could assemble another team. They finished up and got back last week.”

“How did they do?”

“Fort Smith is back in friendly hands. Dave has been on the HF radio talking to other patriot groups around the country. He finally figured out their code phrases, they were surprisingly similar, and we have been communicating with 49 states.”

“Which one haven’t we communicated with?”

“Hawaii. Either they wiped out the Islands or no one with ham equipment is up and running.”

“Has he tried 40 meters? It’s the most reliable all-season DX band, and most popular at night.”

“Ask him yourself, he’ll be over later. It could be any residual ionizing radiation.”

“I don’t think so, but as with everything, I could be wrong.”

“When will you be back on solid food?”

“You’ll have to ask Beth, I had broth when I got up. I’d guess she’ll start me on a soft diet and move up from there. I had intended that the next mission be my last, but now, I’m done.”

“I hadn’t said anything, but I planned this to be my last mission. Mary has been all over me for some time now. I intended to announce it once we returned from Fort Smith.”

“With us having 5 teams of four, that only leaves two vacancies unless we create two extra teams using those Remington rifles. If we were to do that, we’d have seven teams and need a total of 28 people or cut the guards to one per team leaving us three short.”

“We?”

“We old guys will oversee the operations from here. Get busy Joe, we need three more people.”

By the time I was allowed out of bed for good, Dave had briefed me on his contacts around the country, naming the groups, their general AO and size. More recently, everyone began to switch to HF Packet. Maybe if Dave could explain it to me, Joe and I could handle it. Their successes outnumbered their failures.

“I forgot to give you this.”

“A bullet?”

“Your bullet, .308 NATO according to the doctor.”

“They had snipers that close? Why didn’t we see him?”

“I did after he fired. He was on a rooftop and I drilled him with my .308 before he could get another shot.”

“Although Roberto Duran is widely remembered for the now famous words, ‘no más’, he never actually said them, it was actually said by Howard Cosell. As for me, I’m done, no more, I quit.”

“You figure out that packet radio yet?”

“Not exactly, but I’m working on it. I figure you and I can stay down on the farm, tend to the livestock and go horseback riding, weather permitting. Of course, I intend to keep in practice with my firearms. You and I need to scout out Branson more closely when I’m able.”

“Has Beth removed your dressing?”

“Last night.”

“Mind if I look?”

“Go ahead.”

“Can you raise your T-shirt or do you need help?”

“You do it, it’s easier.”

As Joe rolled up my T-shirt, there was a sharp intake of breath. I asked, “How does it look?”

“Like somebody plowed a road in your back.”

“Healing?”

“Healed. The flesh is pink as with any wound but it is all sealed up and doesn’t appear to be infected.”

“Grab that chart Beth kept and let me read it.”

“Are you sure you want to do that?”

“I’ll let you know after I read it.”

“What’s it say?”

“I got one 500ml bag of D30W per day, an IV antibiotic and I think this drug was to prevent me getting pneumonia. When I wasn’t on D30W, I was on normal saline. Thanks, I have a better idea how bad it was.”

“How close was it?”

“In the beginning, I had one foot in a grave and the other on a banana peel. The coma allowed the physical injuries to heal. The EEG from Cox Hospital showed a normal brain pattern according to Beth.”

“Aw hell, you’re too mean to die.”

“We supplied several loads of supplies to them; I wonder how large of a medical bill I have?”

“I paid it for you.”

“How much was it?”

“Ten dollars per day. I think those were for the IV sets.”

“How do they keep going?”

“There’s some kind of stockpile of medicines, called the Strategic National Stockpile under the control of the CDC. They have something called Push Packages.”

“I’ve heard of those. They were supposed to be able to deliver a package in 12 hours.”

“Maybe AB, they could. There are too many obstacles for that now; like few aircraft flying, overpasses on major highways down and so forth.”

“What’s going to happen if our side wins? A new Constitution, elimination of gun laws, what?”

“Nothing wrong with Constitution we have; it’s all those laws in the US Code that have been passed since 1788 when it was ratified. On March 4, 1789, the government under the Constitution began operations. If we win, I would expect to see the gun laws go away but not entirely. There is nothing wrong with ‘shall issue’ CCW laws. With Washington nuked by those terrorists it’s anybody’s guess which records remain.”

“How about the state records?”

“If a state capitol was nuked because it was a population center, they’re probably gone too, Dave. Don’t worry about it; no one is taking our guns away. Not now, not in the future; assuming that we win.”

Even at \$10 per day, I assumed that Joe had laid out a fair sum of money. I asked Beth about it and she told me that she paid Joe back in one tenth ounce gold coins and a little junk silver. Isn’t that a terrible name for coins made out of 90% silver? The real junk coins were the more recent ones. A penny wasn’t 95% copper anymore.

PB, gold and silver coins started to appear in circulation. These weren’t new coins, freshly minted, rather old US gold and silver coins. Because of some people removing a small amount of gold from 24 carat coins, they fell into disfavor. The Krugerrands, which were 22 carat the same as US gold coins, were in widespread use. Most of those were one troy ounce of gold or worth around \$1,500 and few transactions of that size occurred. While South Africa made the half, quarter and one tenth ounce coins, they weren’t widely circulated. Plus there were those people who wouldn’t accept a Krugerrand no matter what, like our neighbor who sold us the Percheron’s.

So far, the draft horses hadn’t been used for field work. They did haul grain and hay in from the fields. Since we had gasoline for the old Ford tractor and the necessary implements, we used it for the heavy work because it was faster. Agricultural chemicals were

unavailable forcing us to fertilize with manure and crop rotation. John had a perennial alfalfa field and rotated crops between soybeans, oats and corn. We added wheat.

The best-known plants which contribute to nitrogen fixation in nature are in the legume family - Fabaceae, which includes such taxa as Clover, beans, alfalfa, lupines and peanuts. They contain symbiotic bacteria called rhizobia within nodules in their root systems, producing nitrogen compounds that help the plant to grow and compete with other plants. When the plant dies, the fixed nitrogen is released; making it available to other plants and this helps to fertilize the soil. Wheat and oats are grasses in a totally different family. After I was healed, Joe and I oversaw daily farming operations while the teams alternated between farming and missions. Changed tactics eliminated our people being wounded.

The Seniors – Epilogue

The wound in my back proved that I wasn't faster than a speeding bullet; more powerful than a locomotive; or, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. Because of that, I pulled out this record and showed it to David, telling him to continue it if I moved on to glory before the story ended. I wanted a family keepsake of sorts, to be handed down from generation to generation, outlining our part in the revitalization of America. Maybe I was fighting a never-ending battle for truth, justice, and the American way. Or maybe, I just didn't like Democrats.

Whatever the case, Joe and I got set up with two geldings, five year olds, and we patrolled both John's farm and our small acreage. In our travels, we'd located a farrier to keep our horses shod, hoofs trimmed, etc. As the herd grew, we needed more tack. The Percheron's, a mare and a stallion, provided offspring, mostly colts, which were gelded. Vet services were provided by our neighbor 3 miles down the road. He performed standing castration using a local anesthetic. While the procedure had a greater chance of minor complications, the only other choice was general anesthesia, something he couldn't handle. Older boys were assigned to keep the animals cleaned, thereafter.

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Over the course of the next year, two things happened: one, Joe and I got a year older; and, two, having been all but eradicated, the forces of dark disappeared into the woodwork, like the cockroaches they were. By this time, federal elections were due and Obama was out because his attempt to get the 22nd Amendment repealed failed. Local groups were organizing the elections and the Electoral College members were being decided in each state. Naval vessels sent to Hawaii found survivors and reestablished communications. There had been no insurrection in Hawaii.

We had three more wounded during that time and considered ourselves lucky that no one was killed. David was one of those wounded, a shot in his left shoulder that left him partially disabled having shattered bones. Assignments/missions included Kansas and Oklahoma, making a total of four states where missions were undertaken. Beth was asked to help with the November election. Geena rode along as 'shotgun'. She had come a long way and made a complete 180° turn in her beliefs concerning firearms from where this little saga began.

Whether it was backlash against the sitting president or simply time for a change, Libertarians won the election in 2016. Many identified with Ron Paul, the Texas Representative, Physician, former Flight Surgeon, Conservative, Republican, Libertarian and Constitutional. He ran for the Presidency three times, 1988, 2008 and 2012.

We learned a lot during the 8 years of the Obama presidency, much of it not good. He had his moments, good and bad. The same could be said for any president we'd had since George Washington. Anyone running for the office makes a lot of promises. Some are kept and some fall by the wayside. For example:

- **Compassionate Conservatism:** The slogan "Compassionate Conservatism" was endlessly used, abused, debated, and interpreted during the Presidential campaign of 2000. "Compassionate Conservatism" is the title of a book by Marvin Olasky, with a Foreword by George W. Bush. Bush is often listed as co-author.

- **Foreign Affairs:** Bush promised a humble foreign policy with no nation building. He had criticized the Clinton-Gore Administration for being too interventionist: "If we don't stop extending our troops all around the world in nation-building missions, then we're going to have a serious problem coming down the road. And I'm going to prevent that."

- **Economy:** Bush promised tax breaks for all, sometimes using the slogan "Whoever pays taxes gets a tax break". The rich pay the most taxes, and the current system weighs the income tax against the upper income brackets. Bush also supported raising the Earned Income Tax Credit, which would primarily benefit the lower brackets of income-tax-affected citizens.

- **Education:** policy named No Child Left Behind, includes mandatory national testing and some support for school vouchers. The No Child Left Behind Act provides increased funding for schools, while requiring greater accountability for results. It gives parents the option to transfer their children to another school, if the current school is failing. It requires teachers to have a degree specific to the subject they are teaching, which had not been federally required in the past. It also makes high school academic records available to military recruiters.

- **Energy:** The Bush campaign supports a comprehensive energy reform bill which includes initiatives for energy conserving technologies as well as decreasing the foreign dependence on oil through increased domestic production and the use of non-fossil fuel based energy production methods. Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and other domestic fields would decrease dependence on oil imports, particularly from the Middle East. However, many environmentalists hold that it will produce such small amounts of petroleum as to be effectively useless and will needlessly harm the environment.

Some actually happened, the Education agenda and some tax breaks. Some succumbed to the 9/11 attacks, especially the nation building. There were no new oil wells in the Arctic. He was reelected and had the same 8 years that Obama had. Comparing the two men showed differences. Bush retired to Texas, Obama retired to Hawaii. Both had supporters and detractors. One appealed to conservatives and the other to liberals. Don't depend on a liberal to protect your rights; FDR signed the National Firearms Act.

There are quite a few stories in the firearms world relating the idea that GCA68 was the word-for-word translation of the German (Nazi) Weapons Act of 1938 (GWA38). This certainly appears to be at least partially true. It is also apparent GCA68 was patterned after aspects of another post WWI law, German Law on Firearms and Ammunition of 1928 (German Law 1928).

But, there is more to GCA68 than just German gun control laws. Great influence was provided by powerful, charismatic, forces to get German laws incorporated into US Law. And one must realize these laws did not travel from Germany across the Atlantic on their own; they definitely had some help.

The provisions of GCA68 had been hotly sought after by Connecticut Senator Thomas J Dodd (a Democrat) and President LB Johnson for several years. It had victories and setbacks along the way, and still did not have all the measures they wanted to see in the final bill.

In regard to LBJ's influence on gun control, it has to be said that there has never been a more convincing and powerful force over the will of Congress. He repeatedly championed the idea of total gun control in the last years of his term as President. At every chance, he used the television and other formal appearances to shamelessly promote the denial of Second Amendment rights to all Americans. We will include quite a few of the excerpts from his speeches and quotes to this end.

GCA68 was preceded by the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act (OCCSSA), June 1968. The handgun control provisions in OCCSSA were amended by GCA68 to include rifles and shotguns.

GCA68 took a very convoluted path to passage and ultimately drew upon the murder and assassination of at least three key figures to finally get the needed Congressional sponsorship and public support to pass.

A Republican championed the cause of the Firearm Owners Protection Act. In the Report of the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, 97th Congress, Second Session (February 1982), a bipartisan subcommittee (consisting of 3 Republicans and 2 Democrats) of the US Senate investigated the Second Amendment and reported its findings. The report stated:

The conclusion is thus inescapable that the history, concept, and wording of the second amendment to the Constitution of the United States, as well as its interpretation by every major commentator and court in the first half century after its ratification, indicates that what is protected is an individual right of a private citizen to own and carry firearms in a peaceful manner.

As debate for FOPA was in its final stages, Rep. William J. Hughes (D-NJ) proposed an amendment to ban the civilian ownership or transfer of any fully-automatic weapon which was not registered by May 19, 1986. However, any such weapon manufactured and registered before the May 19 cutoff could still be legally owned and transferred by civilians. There was the Brady Law and Bill Clinton's AWB, with a 10 year sunset clause. However it was HR 45, as amended, that became the new permanent AWB.

So you, the future generations of my family, keep this history in mind because 'they' never give up, look at LBJ. It not a question of us needing firearms, it is a question of firearms being used to protect that which we hold dear, our Liberty. Remember what Jefferson said:

God forbid we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion. The people cannot be all, and always, well informed. The part which is wrong will be discontented, in proportion to the importance of the facts they misconceive. If they remain quiet under such misconceptions, it is lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty. ... What country before ever existed a century and half without a rebellion? And what country can preserve its liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms. The remedy is to set them right as to facts, pardon and pacify them. What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.

David Morgan, Sr.
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